

Read our New Serial Story "WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?"
commencing in this Number.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"THAT'S MOTHER CALLING," SAID THE GIRL, AS SHE TURNED TO LEAVE; "I MUST GO TO HER."

A NOBLE RENUNCIATION.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

On a still afternoon in early summer, and in one of the quietest corners of a small country town in the south of England, a young girl was standing beside the gate of a semi-detached villa of unpretentious size—a beautiful girl, too, in a way—not exactly the refined beauty which we are accustomed to associate with high rank, but a rustic belle, in the full enjoyment of glorious health.

As she stood there in perfect repose, watching the casual passer-by, you might have been tempted to credit her with a greater share of loveliness than she actually possessed, for the

tall, slim figure, with its well-fitting dress, hovering, however, on the borders of good taste, and the well-set head and luxuriant auburn hair, showed to the best advantage in its absolute repose.

If one had watched the changes on the pretty face he would have almost been inclined to say that the girl's beauty was probably her only point. The look of a spoilt child or petted beauty was stamped clearly upon it, and yet looked again, and looked carefully, there were many points about it which seemed to promise better things.

At times a firm expression came over the face, a look of strong will and of purpose, which quite changed it, and appeared to lay out hopes of better things than the first casual glance had foreshadowed.

Apparently to-day she had nothing to do but watch the lane and its passers-by, the listlessness of her attitude, and careless expression of her

face, seeming to show how little she had to occupy her.

Presently, however, her expression changed, and a look of interest came over the careless face. From the far end came the sound of a horse's feet falling slowly on the ear, and presently the animal itself turned the corner.

Riding along slowly, his hands scarcely doing more than support the reins which lay idly on the horse's neck, came a young fellow of about three-and-twenty. From his clean-shaved face and its long, fair moustaches, his square shoulders and well-set-up figure, as well as from the cut of his clothes, you could at once recognise the soldier.

The handsome bay thoroughbred which he was riding seemed to be in perfect accord with him, for as his master sat listlessly on his back occupied with his thoughts, the horse slowly picked his way down the lane as quietly as a bishop's park-hack, and to all appearance as innocent of initiating

the slightest movement without his rider's full consent.

The girl was half hidden, or more from the horse and his rider, by a large bush which stood on one side of the gateway. As they reached her she drew slightly back, and her moving frightened the thoroughbred. With a snort he jumped to the other side of the road, nearly throwing his rider, who was quite taken by surprise in doing so.

The girl gave a slight scream at seeing what she took to be the other's imminent danger, and so called attention to herself.

The horseman cast a rapid glance across the road, saw what appeared to be a very pretty girl in a charming attitude of terror, quitted his horse, and then approached the gate.

"I am afraid," he began, lifting his hat, "that we have frightened you between us."

"Oh, no! At least you seemed to be going to—." Then not liking to carry the sentence to its legitimate end she hesitated.

"Fall off," he said, finishing it for her, and laughing the while. "Very near, it is true, but not quite. I don't know what frightened Sultan. He is not given to shying."

The merry face and laughing blue eyes reassured the girl, and she began to laugh, too.

"I am glad you didn't, as it might have been a bad accident," she said. "I am always so frightened when I see horses getting restive. She meant restive.

"Sultan never is restive," said the other, patting his favourite's glossy neck. "I don't think he knows how to be. Besides, a spill is not nearly such a terrible thing as you think. I've had dozens."

"Have you?" The beautiful eyes opened to their fullest extent. "And were you never hurt?"

"Sometimes a bit stiff after them, nothing more," was the answer.

"Lucy! Where are you?" came from the semi-detached villa. "I want you at once."

"That's mother calling," said the girl as she turned to leave. "I must go to her."

"Good-bye," said the youth, and he raised his hat.

"Good-bye," said the maid as she disappeared, leaving the other in the position of the boy who had just enough milk-and-water to make him wish for more.

He felt a bit angry with himself as he went on his way, because he had not been able to detain her, though, after all, he had not any excuse for doing so. It is only right to add that for the remainder of his ride he thought a good deal more about the girl and his little adventure than he had any right to do, while she on her part could not get the face of the "soldierly" stranger with the laughing blue eyes and the long fair moustache out of her head, and had to be reproved several times in the course of the afternoon for the carelessness with which she set about the household duties given her by her mother. The master ought to have ended there, but unfortunately it did not do so.

CHAPTER II.

If to have been born heir to twenty thousand a-year, and to have succeeded to one's inheritance at three years of age constitutes happiness, Sidney Vere might be termed a happy man.

The only child of the old age of the head of one of the oldest families in —shire, he had lost his mother at his birth, and his father three years later. His estate, large enough when he succeeded to them, had been carefully nursed by his guardians, and when, after a course of Eton and Sandhurst, he passed into the "Royal Pinks"—as the famous cavalry corps to which he was posted was called—he had not long to wait before he found himself absolute master of an income which few men in the army nowadays can boast of.

It was never intended either by himself or his guardians that he was to make a profession of soldiering; what was wanted was a means of

passing those few years of a man's life in which he goes from boyhood to manhood, and it was thought he could have his flogging as well in a crack cavalry regiment destined for a good round of English stations as elsewhere. Now that he had in any way been wild. On the contrary, he was so quiet and gentlemanly that his uncle, who was also his guardian, was rather apt to say that "the lad had no 'go' in him," while his aunt held him up as a model young man, and quoted him as such.

In his regiment he was popular, and rather looked up to by his brother subalterns, not because he was a leader among them, but because he was "eminently" "good form," while the serious liked him as a man who was certain to uphold the credit of his corps.

At dinner that night he was, contrary to his usual habit, rather silent and preoccupied, so much so, indeed, that he was rallied about it by the rest of his brother officers. He was able by pulling himself together to join in the conversation, though ever and anon he seemed to be wandering away from his surroundings.

The fact was that a little figure dressed in a pretty blue dress, with a pretty face, on which was a half shy, half saucy smile as the lips framed the words "good-bye," would keep rising before his eyes.

"Well, which of you are going to this dance at the Town Hall to-night?" asked the grey-headed colonel, when the wine was placed on the table, and the servants had withdrawn. "I think someone ought to represent the corps. It's the mayor's birthday, or some such thing, and as the townspeople have been civil, and Alderman Gubbins made a strong point of it, I almost promised some of us would turn up. You can go in uniform if you like."

There was a pause. No one seemed inclined to go.

"Well, come," resumed the colonel, "I'll go myself. Who'll come too? Three more will be quite enough, and I can drive you."

Sidney Vere looked up from the end of the table.

"I'll make one, Colonel," he said.

A titter ran round the room. Sidney was a first-rate dancer, and sufficiently fastidious to hate mixed public entertainments, besides being too shy to mix freely with strangers.

"You'll need to sheer up a bit," said Chatterton, one of the captains who was sitting opposite to him, "or you won't be particularly good company. I'll make another, Colonel. It will be amusing to see how Vere gets through it."

A fourth was quickly found, and a conveyance having been procured, the four started amidst the cheers, chiefly derisive, of their comrades.

Deposited at the door of the Town Hall their arrival caused some sensation, which they had not calculated on. A guard of honour of the local volunteers, who had greeted the mayor on his arrival with the usual salute, woke up and seized the opportunity of the arrival of the military big-wig to present arms again. Then Alderman Gubbins, very red in the face and hot from his exertions, and decorated by a huge white rosette, came bustling out and received them with effusion, shaking hands with a scrunch that made the Colonel wince, and Sidney Vere regret that he had come.

The good man insisted on their at once joining the aristocracy of the place, and marched the four of them right up to the very extremity of the room.

They arrived just as the dancers were commencing a quadrille, and as he passed along Vere thought he caught sight of a pretty face he had seen before among the many heads which turned to see who the new arrivals were.

The quadrille finished, and the four officers having exhausted the few topics, such as the weather, on which they could meet the old ladies on equal terms, found the dance flooded by younger beauties, several of whom cast eager glances towards the figures in uniform.

Before he well realized it Vere found he had led out one of the mayor's daughters and the youngest Miss Gubbins, the first of whom had just grasped the rudiments of high art, and the

second had not an idea beyond dancing. He was just pausing after his exertions, and beginning to wish himself in bed, when he was button-holed by the alderman in person.

"Not done yet, Captain?" he began. "I hope you are not tired already."

"Not at all, Mr. Gubbins," said Vere, heartily wishing his entertainer anywhere out of the way. "I am enjoying myself immensely."

"Gave a partner for the next waltz!"

"I am sorry to say I have not. I was thinking of resting—"

"Get you one at once," cried the other, utterly drowning the feeble plea his victim was beginning. "Lots of pretty girls here. Take your pick," and he waved his hand round the room.

"You're very good," said Vere, determined to make a virtue of necessity. "I think I should like to be introduced to that young lady in pink over there."

While he was speaking his eye had wandered round the room, and lighted on the form of his friend of that afternoon.

The old alderman looked a little surprised, for the owner of the pink dress was not by any means within the pale of good society in Swinmerleigh.

"All right," he said. "I don't know the lady, but as I'm a steward it's all right. Come along."

It is a little trying at the best of times to be led across half the length of a big room, and then brought face to face with a stranger.

Vere's uniform and the clank of his spurs attracted more than the usual attention, and half the eyes in the room were fixed on him, as Alderman Gubbins, in a loud voice and some flourish, proclaimed his mission.

"Allow me to introduce Captain Vere, Miss —." He paused for a minute, while his charge daintily caught him up saying,—

"May I have the pleasure of the next dance?"

"I am afraid I am engaged for the next to Mr. Jones," said his fair friend of that afternoon, pointing to an insipid youth, whom Vere at once recognised as a clerk in the local bank.

"Can you give me one later?" pursued Vere.

"I'm not engaged for number eight," was the answer.

Vere took her card and wrote his name down.

The dance was the next but two, and with a bow he slipped away to the refreshment-room to keep out of further harm's way.

As the band struck up the introduction to "Sweethearts" he again entered the ball-room, and easily found his partner. A minute later they were flying down the room.

Vere was a very good dancer, and to-night he was enjoying himself. He found his partner could dance well too, and the turn was a long one. At last his partner pleaded for a rest.

"I hope I have not tired you?" he said, as he led her to a quiet corner of the room.

"Not a bit. It was lovely!" she said, giving him the full benefit of her beautiful eyes. "I never enjoyed a dance so much before."

"Well, I suppose I must take that as a compliment," laughed Vere; "but let me tell you I dance well too, or we could not have managed so well."

It was rather a conceited speech, as he thought afterwards, but at the time it seemed all right. The girl took it quite seriously.

"I wish everyone danced like you," she said.

"Half one's partners only stamp round one, a good many tear one's dress, and once my partner fell down in the middle of the room, and pulled me over too."

"What a catastrophe!" said Vere, unconsciously mimicking her tone of horror at the mishap. "I am glad I did not see it."

"Now you are laughing at me," she said.

"On the contrary, I mean it. I never was more serious in my life. But come, one turn more," and they were off again.

At the end of that dance Vere secured another, and then another, until people began to stare at the couple, and the ill-natured to make remarks.

The hours flew by so quickly that Vere was quite surprised when the band struck up "God

"Save the Queen," and the last of the dancers prepared to depart. He got his partner her cloak, and gave her his arm as far as the hall, where he found an elderly lady with two plain daughters, who had been particularly active all night, waiting for them.

"I hope you are ready at last," said the forbidding female, with some severity, and a slight stress on the word in italics.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting, Aunt Marv," said Lucy. "I am quite ready now."

Vere helped her into the fly which was waiting outside, and wished them "good-night."

Just before they drove off the aforementioned Jones bounded down the steps, and called out,—

"Good-night, Miss Stubbs."

"Good-night, Mr. Jones," answered the clear voice of Miss Lucy.

"Lucy Stubbs!" thought Vere, as he stood alone on the steps. "Not a very aristocratic name. However, she's a dear little woman, and her name does not matter much."

He lit a cigar, and throwing his coat over his arm was just preparing to start to walk back when he heard his name pronounced behind him.

"Ready to go home, Vere?" asked Chatterton. "We'll walk together."

"You still here, Chatterton?" asked the other, in surprise.

"Yea. The Colonel said he was sure you were enjoying yourself with your little friend in pink, so he would not disturb you when he left, and I volunteered to stay and see you did not get into mischief."

There was just enough of a sneer in the last sentence to make Vere resent it; but he pretended he did not notice it, and on his answering "all right" the pair started together to walk home.

CHAPTER III.

SIDNEY VERE turned into bad that morning with very mixed feelings. They say stolen fruits are always sweetest, and possibly the knowledge that he had been doing something out of the common made him overrate the pleasure of Miss Stubbs' society.

As he dozed off to sleep confused ideas of angels in the shape of pretty girls in pink dresses, and demons, who generally took the form of Captain Chatterton, kept running through his brain; but, above all the sneer about "mischief" stuck to him, and gave an unpleasant turn to his dreams that morning.

There was nothing for him to do that day, so he did not turn out till breakfast time.

There was nobody in the room but the Colonel, who good-naturedly rallied him about his dancing the night before, and was greatly amused when he heard at what hour he came home.

The day passed in the ordinary way, except that he spent the afternoon at a tennis party, at a house which lay in the exact opposite direction to the Brighton-road, where Miss Stubbs lived. Somehow he felt inclined to go home that way, but it would have been absurd to make a circuit of three miles on the chance of getting a mazy word with a young woman whom he had never seen till the day before.

The next day was Sunday. As he marched with his troop up to the old parish church he caught a glimpse of a figure he thought he knew disappearing up the steps of the organ loft, and when he got to his place in the front he saw right enough that Miss Lucy was placed in the front row of the choir. As he looked up he caught her eyes, and the collision resulted in a very becoming blush.

During the rest of the service his efforts to attract her attention were quite useless. She kept her eyes fixed on her books.

Outside, however, as the party were being formed up she tripped past him, and acknowledged his salute with a bow and a smile.

The incident did not escape the keen eyes of the rector's wife, who was watching the party march off, and caused some surprise on her part.

It was not until late on Monday afternoon that Sidney Vere found himself again in Brighton-road. Sultan, as usual, was encumbering along

very quietly, and his rider lost in thought, when just as he reached the end of the road the horse was surprised by a sharp cut with Sidney's cane on his flank.

The truth was a gate about half-way down swung open, and a trim little figure appeared, and began to walk quickly down the road in the opposite direction to the horse and his rider. It was not long, however, before they overtook the fugitive.

Miss Stubbs greeted them with a sunny smile as Sidney began, rather hesitatingly, to express his surprise at meeting her there.

"I always take a walk about this time," was Lucy's answer. "After all my work is done mother lets me go out for an hour or two, and I generally walk towards the downs. It is quiet there."

"By work I suppose you mean the various nothings which ladies call an occupation?" said Vere.

"I don't know what ladies' nothings are," she answered; "but my work is real. You see mother is so often ill that I have to keep house and look after the children too, and sometimes they are very troublesome."

The smile had faded, and a serious look came over the pretty face. Vere hastened to continue.

"You must be an awfully nice housekeeper for everybody," he said. "My ideas of housekeepers are stout old ladies with large bunches of keys, and cupboards where they keep jam and other nice things, at least, that last is a reminiscence of my boyhood. But seriously, Miss Stubbs, do you walk every evening on this road?"

"Yea," she answered. "I like it best of any about here. This lane we are in is so beautiful that I never tire of it."

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," quoted her companion. "I quite agree with you. It is a lovely view."

As he spoke they reached the end of the lane, where it opened on to the downs themselves—a broad expanse of lovely green sward, sloping away near where they stood to a well-wooded valley, in which nestled the picturesque home-steads.

Beyond again rose the dim outlines of dark forest, through the uppermost trees of which came the red and gold light of a lovely sunset.

Both paused, as if instinctively, to watch the glorious beauty of the scene. For a couple of minutes neither spoke, and then it was over. The gold faded as the sun sank below the distant hill, the light disappeared with it, and the red glow alone remained as a token of departed glory.

Vere slid off his horse's back, and threw the reins over his arm. Then turning to Lucy he asked if she were going to walk any farther. At first she demurred.

"I don't usually stay out so late," she said, "but it was such a beautiful evening that I could not resist."

"All the more reason not to go home now," said Vere. "There is a good hour yet of sufficient light to walk, and on such a warm night it is a pleasure to be out of doors."

After a little hesitation Lucy gave in, and the pair wandered across the downs, Sultan following quietly at the length of his rein. At first both were a little shy and reserved, but as the time passed this thawed, and soon they were chatting away gaily like old friends.

The hour passed so pleasantly that they had no idea how late it was till the clock at the Town Hall striking seven warned them how long they had been walking. Lucy gave a little cry of dismay.

"Father will be wondering why I have not come to tea," she said. "It's long past his time."

"We had better walk as fast as we can," said Vere, not without misgivings of his own about the questions likely to be provoked by a late appearance at dinner. "We can get back quickly straight across the downs."

"Very well," she answered. "I'll walk my best."

About half-way across the sound of horse's hoofs on the turf caught Vere's attention. He looked up as the new arrival passed, and though

it was dusk, and the horseman a hundred yards off, he plainly recognised Chatterton's chestnut hunter "Maxwell," and had no doubt who the rider was. This circumstance rather disconcerted him, as thus for a second time the latter had come across him alone with Miss Stubbs.

As they neared the end of the Brighton-road Lucy stopped and held out her hand.

"I'll say good-bye here," she said, with a slight blush.

Vere would have liked to brazen it out, and walk with her up to her own gate, as if there were nothing unusual in his doing so. He determined to propose it.

"I am not going to let you walk home by yourself," he said. "I must see you in."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because it is now nearly dark, and as I have kept you out I am responsible for seeing you get safely home," he said, "so come along."

"Really I would rather you did not," said Lucy, getting now very much embarrassed. "I am sure you won't come if I ask you not to."

"But why?" said Vere, his spirit of opposition aroused.

"Because you are an officer and I a shopkeeper's daughter, if I must tell you," said poor Lucy. "The neighbours would talk, and father himself would be angry at my walking with you," and the tears began to rise.

"I did not mean to hurt you," said Vere, now very contrite. "I am very sorry indeed I asked you. You are quite right. I gain nothing and you loss a great deal."

"Then you won't come?" asked Lucy.

"I'm not quite such a brute as that," he said. "If you ask me not to do a thing I shall not do it, of course, but in return tell me when you will come for another walk!"

"Don't you think this had better be the last?" she asked, looking at him bravely in the face.

"Why should it?" was his questioning answer.

"Because you and I are not ever likely to meet elsewhere. You belong to one rank of life and I to another," she answered.

Vere laughed rather more boisterously than easily.

"What does that matter? Why don't you tell the truth, and say that we have had a stupid walk, and you want to avoid such another evening?" he said.

"No, no!" she cried, more earnestly than caution warranted, "I am sure you must not think so. I have enjoyed my walk very much."

"So much that you won't come again?" said Vere.

"What a tease you are, to be sure!" she said, dropping unconsciously into her vulgar manner.

"Then you'll come!" he asked, pressing his advantage.

For an instant she wavered. Then holding out her hand she said,—

"Very well, on Thursday."

"And where shall I meet you?" he asked.

"By the old oak at the end of the lane."

"And the time?"

"Four o'clock," was Lucy's answer. "And now really I must say good-night," and she held out her hand.

"Good-night," he said, and taking her hand drew her quickly towards him; then bending down he kissed her. For a moment she resigned herself to him, then recovering, drew back.

"I won't come if you don't promise not to do that again," she cried, half inclined to be vexed, half not knowing what to say, and breaking away she ran off down the lane.

"Mind you are punctual," was his answer.

It was now more than half-past seven, and they dined at eight up at the barracks; so vaulting on to Sultan's back, he pressed him into a smart trot, and reached his room ten minutes before eight.

Dressing as quickly as he could he managed to reach the mess just as the others were going into dinner. As he passed Chatterton their eyes met, and Sidney knew he had been recognized.

After dinner, resisting the temptations of whist or pool, Vere retired to a chair placed outside, and calling for a "B. and S." sat and smoked his cigar in silence and solitude. He flattered him-

self he was reviewing the events of the last few days in an impartial way, and making a dispassionate criticism of the whole affair. He thought Lucy a charming girl, who knew how to take care of herself, and that he himself knew how far an affair of this sort ought to go; in fact, that everything would go smoothly. He enjoyed his intrigue, and never thought of the girl and what her feelings might be.

The last of his brother officers leaving the mess stumbled across him.

"Hullo! Vere, still here!" he said, "thought you'd gone to bed long ago. Coming across?"

"Is it late?" asked Sidney.

"Past twelve," was the answer. "Come along."

"By Jove! I'd no idea. I must have been asleep," said Vere.

"Oc in love," laughed the other.

The random shot hit the mark. As Vere turned into bed his last thoughts were of Lucy Stubbs, whom he had known precisely one hundred hours.

As for the girl, she had been met by all sorts of inquiries as to why she had returned so late; but seeing that her father was in an exceptionally good humour she satisfied them with the excuse that the fineness of the evening had caused her to walk farther than her usual constitutional.

For her the evening passed heavily by contrast with the happy afternoon; and when she went to bed it was to dream of a certain young gentleman with a fair moustache, whose lips had been pressed to hers but a short time before. She, too, was scorched without knowing it.

CHAPTER IV.

A MONTH passed, and a good part of a second, without Sidney Vere's making any great alteration in his mode of living.

The first meeting by appointment led to another, and that to a third, and so on until it became a matter of course that Lucy and Vere should meet at least every other day.

Chatterton just at this time was called away on private business, and Vere had the field to himself, secure from even the shadow of an interruption.

To say that these six weeks had been with any material effect on either of them would be to greatly underrate the influence which two people—young, impressionable, and good-looking—naturally exercise over each other.

Lucy had grown confidential, and told Sidney a great deal more about herself than she might be aware of; and he, pleased by the confidence this pretty young creature reposed in him, encouraged her to tell all she cared to.

So Lucy had poured out her hopes and fears, her joys and woes, as freely as she might have done to a girl confidant of her own age, little thinking or intending to touch him as she did.

To a man who all his life had only had to wish for a thing to get it there was something almost annoying in finding that anyone else had wants or wishes unfulfilled, and when that somebody was a young girl of great beauty and sweetness of nature he could not avoid a chivalrous desire to do something to help her. So without knowing it the pair assumed new roles, the pretty maiden in distress, the gallant knight come to her rescue.

It becomes dangerous for both when a young man and a pretty girl assume these relations to each other, and it is not surprising that, as Sidney Vere was sitting in his room one evening waiting for the first meal call, that his thoughts took rather a disagreeable turn.

The events of the past few weeks would keep crowding before him, and he could not help fearing that the path which he was treading must eventually lead him into doubtful ground, and that a time would come when his duty to himself and his relations must clash with the result of his past work.

"I wonder where this will end!" he thought. "I wish to goodness that I had never met her. She's a dear little woman, and we've seen a good deal more of each other than we ought to have; but what can it lead to? I might even keep it

up till the regiment marches, but even then I'm no better off. I've a good mind to stop it all, and go on leave just to break with her. If it has got to be done the sooner it's done the better. By Jove! it's time to dress for dinner."

When he reached the mess he found a letter waiting for him, which he read with some surprise. It was from the elder of his guardians, an uncle who was a Member of Parliament and well known in town.

Although there was nothing in it to take exception to, and nothing really to surprise him, he could not help feeling annoyed and a good deal surprised that it should have appeared just at this juncture.

It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR SIDNEY,—

"It is so long since your poor aunt and I have heard from you that we think you must have quite forgotten us. I don't, of course, believe that you have, and I can assure you that though you neglect us we take the warmest interest in your well-being."

"Only a few days since we were having a talk about you which leads me to write and ask you to come up and have a talk with us."

"The fact is, my dear boy, we are agreed that it is high time you married, left the army, and settled down to the position to which you have been born."

"You and I both agreed that to go into the army was a very good start in life, and a capital way of passing the first three or four years after a young fellow's emancipation from school. But we neither of us intended you to make it a profession, which is what you will be doing if you stop much longer. I think you ought to retire at once, or as soon as you can suit yourself with a wife."

"I hear, too, incidentally, that Jones-Parry really means to ask for the Chiltern Hundreds at the end of the session, and you ought to stand for the county. I have no doubt of your being elected, as your father and grandfather were before you. Just think it over, and then come up here like a good boy and say what your views are. You need not send any excuses about leave, because I met your Colonel the other day, and he says he can manage that all right. Send a line to your aunt, to say when we are to expect you, and with our united love, believe me, your affectionate uncle,

"HERBERT VERE."

"P.S.—We met a Captain Chatterton of your regiment the other day at Stapleford's. I did not see much of him, but your aunt was greatly taken with him."

It was not till Sidney read the letter through a second time that he noticed the postscript, which was over the last page.

When he did it made him knit his brows and come to the conclusion that Chatterton had told his uncle that he was getting entangled with Lucy Stubbs.

His first impulse was to write and refuse to come, and he did so, wording the letter strongly, in fact, almost rudely, in his refusal to be guided by his uncle's advice.

Luckily, he put the letter in his pocket to give to his servant to post, and found it on his dressing-table next morning. With that morning came a better frame of mind. Thinking over the letter more calmly, Sidney came to the conclusion that it was an accident, in which Chatterton had had no hand; and, moreover, he rather jumped at this way of getting out of his difficulties.

It would be easy to give Lucy an excuse about his urgent family business, and by the time he got back she would have forgotten all about him.

If he went away in a hurry she might be "cut up rough," he mentally added; but this way she had not the shadow of an excuse for doing so.

So he sat down and wrote to his aunt that he would come in three or four days' time, and then went and asked for leave, which he quite expected would be granted at once. Then he had nothing left to do but to sit and wait for it to be granted.

The day before he expected it to be granted

he rode down to the Brighton-road, and, as usual, found Lucy on the look-out for him—an everyday occurrence of late. Her first question was about his long absence.

"I have not seen you for nearly a week," she said; "where have you been?"

"I've been a good deal bothered lately," was his answer, for he meant to enlarge upon the urgent family business. "My guardian has been writing to me about some important matters, and they have worried me."

"I thought you were too big to have a guardian!" said Lucy; "only little boys have them."

"He is not my guardian now," said Sidney, "but he was for a long time. Besides, he is my uncle, and has always been my father too; my own died when I was a baby."

"Oh!" said Lucy, doubtfully.

"Yes, and I have to go to town to see him," continued Vere.

"Going away!" cried Lucy, in dismay.

"Only for a few days," said Sidney, touched by the tone of sorrow in which she spoke.

"Ah, I know what that means!" cried Lucy; "once away, you won't come back. Oh! I shall miss you so!"

And at the very thought of the deprivation her eyes filled with tears.

Vere was a man, and a very young one. His only notion of comforting was to put his arm round her waist and kiss her.

"Never mind, Lucy," he said, tenderly. "I shan't be away long, and when I come back you'll be all the more pleased to see me."

"You'll never come back," sobbed the girl; "I know you won't. You will forget all about me."

"I shan't really. I'll write to you, too, and I'll come back all right," said Vere, saying more than he meant under the influence of her tears. At the time perhaps he honestly intended to come.

"Promise!" she said.

"I promise," was his answer.

And so the storm cleared away. Only there was one point on which Lucy wished a clear understanding; there were to be no letters. She did not wish her father to know of her love affair. Then they changed the subject, and walked along as pleasantly as their wont was, until the setting sun warned them that it was time to return.

They said "good-bye" in the lane; only just as she was leaving him Lucy returned, and throwing both her arms round his neck kissed him.

She had never looked so lovely. For a second prudence flew to the winds, and Vere was on the point of saying something very rash, but he hesitated, and the instant after she was gone.

"By Jove! I a narrow escape!" he said to himself, as he rode slowly homewards. "If she did that often I should be a gone man. Poor little woman, she's awfully cut up at my going. Anyhow, I'll see it does not occur again."

So the next day he travelled up to London, and in the course of a week or so he had forgotten all about Lucy. Not altogether, as a matter of fact, but he thought he had.

He determined to look out for a wife, and arranged to stand for the county in case Mr. Jones-Parry, who had been going to retire for the last ten years, really made up his mind to do so at last.

It was only of an evening at a dinner or a dance, when some young lady was particularly recommended to his notice by his aunt, that he could not help contrasting her with some one he had seen a great deal of lately; and, to his aunt's surprise, he took a great fancy to a most ineligible young lady, simply because of a fancied resemblance to Lucy Stubbs.

So his leave dragged on, and, to his relative's surprise and dismay, no one seemed to suit his fancy.

It was a year more than usually fruitful in its crop of new beauties, but none of them, nor of their predecessors of former years, seemed in any way to attract him.

The obvious favour which both the younger ladies and their mothers showed the handsome soldier with the fine estate did not seem to have

any effect on him, and he was no nearer falling in love than at the beginning of his leave.

In the meantime what had happened to Lucy Stubbs? Hers was a far harder task than Vere's. He, at all events, had the hundred-and-one distractions offered to a young fellow in town; she had to face the ordinary dull round of her duty at home, without any amusement to draw her attention from her thoughts, and the deprivation of the one thing which had made her life so happy of late.

However, events were hurrying on, which soon gave her enough to think about.

CHAPTER V.

It was about a week or ten days after Sidney Vere's departure when Lucy Stubbs one evening, rather more than usually tired by her day's work, slipped out towards evening for her usual stroll across the downs.

She had been made unhappy all the day by her sick mother's querulousness, and by the constant annoyances of her younger brothers and sisters, and was glad to escape to her favourite haunts, now doubly loved on account of their association with Sidney Vere.

She was about half-way across the downs when she noticed a stranger walking slowly in such a direction that they were bound to meet. She did not take any more notice of him until they were close together, when, as she looked up to see how best to pass him, to her surprise the stranger raised his hat, and wished her "good evening" by name.

"I think you have made a mistake," said Lucy, rather frightened at being addressed thus unceremoniously.

"I cannot lay claim to the pleasure of your acquaintance," said the other, who was, in fact, Chatterton. "But I am a friend of Mr. Vere's, whom you know, I believe."

"Has he given you any message for me?" asked Lucy, betraying her eagerness by her heightened colour.

"Not exactly a message," said Chatterton, coolly. "But what I have to say concerns him entirely."

"What is it?" asked Lucy.

"Pardon me, but your question is rather abrupt. Suppose we walk on, and I have no doubt I shall be able to satisfy you."

They had been standing on the spot where they first met, but now Lucy bowed her assent, and they walked on together.

"Excuse me if I appear to cross-question you, Miss Stubbs," began Chatterton; "but how long have you known Sidney Vere?"

"A long time," answered Lucy; "that is, two months at least."

"And during that time you have seen a great deal of each other?"

Lucy looked at him. A suspicion was beginning to spring up in her mind that this was not quite regular, and that he was asking more than he had any right to do. She determined to surprise.

"I hardly understand you," she said.

"I mean you have met frequently!" asked Chatterton.

"Yes."

"And alone!" said the other, with an emphasis which caused his victim to pause in her walk, and brought the colour to her cheeks.

"You have no right to ask such questions," she cried. "I do not know who you are or what you mean, but I feel you do not want to do me any good turn."

Her companion smiled—a smile that made her feel more than ever uncomfortable. Then suddenly changing his half careless manner for one of great energy, he exclaimed,

"If that is your idea, Miss Stubbs, I will wish you good evening. I came here to-night as Sidney Vere's friend, as one who was willing to be your friend as well. The matter is in your own hands. If you wish me to go, and refuse to hear me, well and good. If, however, you are willing to discuss with me what I have to propose, better still."

"As you say, I have no right to cross-question you, no right to make your acquaintance in this irregular way, but I must plead my friendship for Mr. Vere as my excuse for my folly; and as for my boldness in addressing you, then I can only tell you that I expected better treatment at your hands."

He paused for answer. It was slow in coming. In spite of the allusion to Sidney Vere, and the fact that his claims to be heard were founded for friendship to the same, Lucy felt that this man was not her friend, and distrusted him accordingly. As often happens in such cases, she had two courses open to her, and ended by choosing the wrong one.

"I cannot send you away. Indeed, I do not wish to," she began, "if you are really honest in what you say. I did not like your questioning me, and was angry. I am sorry if I was wrong. I will hear all you have to say."

A quick look of triumph passed over her companion's face, and a new ring was in his voice as he spoke. It quickly steadied, however, and he proceeded.

"I am glad of your decision," he said, "and hope to prove I am right. And now, if you are willing to listen, I will go on."

Lucy nodded her assent.

"To spare you the further pain of cross-examination," he continued, "I will put the case plainly to you. I need not mention names; you will understand plainly enough what I mean."

Lucy again nodded, and Chatterton proceeded,—

"A certain young fellow of large fortune and old family, belonging to a distinguished cavalry regiment, happens to be in a dull country quarter. By accident he makes the acquaintance of a very charming young girl, who, in spite of great personal attractions, is neither his equal in birth nor position. You will forgive my putting the case plainly!" he added, breaking off in his tale of an imaginary couple. "Not content with distinguishing this rustic belle by dancing with her for a whole evening at a public assembly, he seeks an opportunity of renewing his acquaintance, succeeds in doing so, and the result is that their meetings alone are constant and regular!"

Again he paused to collect his thoughts.

"In such cases there can only be two results," he continued, presently; "and both of them are evil enough. I have only to deal with one of them. The pair fall in love with each other, and the lad being an honest lad offers marriage." As he said this, Chatterton, hoping to throw Lucy off her guard, turned round and looked at her.

She met his eyes as fearlessly as he could have wished had he wished her not to be the promised wife of his dearest friend. Indeed, as he finished she spoke herself,—

"Go on with your story," she said, and her cool tone almost told the other what he wished to know so much, viz., whether Vere had made her an offer of marriage or not.

"The result is not hard to continue. The young man's friends hear of his scrape, she interferes. The boy is sent abroad, the girl is bought off, and there is an end of an unpleasant incident. What do you think of my story, Miss Stubbs?"

"I think it is possible, but not probable," she said, looking him full in the face. "If these two were really fond of each other all the relations in the world would not have parted them, and the girl in particular must have been a very unworthy specimen of her sex if she would barter her honest love for any sum of money which they might offer."

She spoke so firmly, so confidently, that Chatterton was nonplussed. He determined to take the bull by the horns.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing the future Mrs. Vere?" he asked.

He knew Sidney was too open in his dealings to have married without telling his friends.

"You ask a great deal too much," cried Lucy, now seriously angry. "Were it not that silence might lead you to suppose that Mr. Vere had asked me to be his wife I should refuse to answer, but as it is, and as you seem determined to take the worst view of everything, I will tell you that

he has not, nor, so far as I know, is he likely to do so."

Chatterton was astonished at her coolness. He at once fell into the mistake of supposing that as she did not storm she did not care. Greatly relieved he proceeded at once.

"I am glad to hear it, Miss Stubbs," he said. "I may tell you I am here on behalf of his relations, who have heard accidentally that he was becoming entangled in a discreditable intrigue. It will be a great pleasure to me to be able to contradict the story, and, above all to say that the lady whose acquaintance he has made is far too sensible to allow him to make a fool of himself. I need not tell you that the Vere's are a leading family in —shire, Sidney is now head of the family, and his people propose to make him stand for the county. Above all, they are anxious that he should marry suitably and settle down. We were afraid he was going to make an ass of himself. It would not have been a happy marriage for either of you. He would have married a charming wife, of course, but you could hardly have taken the part. Your shortcoming would have made him ashamed of you, and then dislike would have followed. It is best as it is."

"It is," said Lucy, in a hard voice.

"I have nothing more to say or do," said Chatterton, as they just reached the end of the lane. "Oh! yes, by-the-bye. Your conduct in this matter will make Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Vere your friends for life. I am commissioned to say that if their interest is of any use to you, if you wished to be a governess or anything of that sort, that they will be delighted to help you."

"Thanks," said Lucy, in the same constrained manner as before, "but I have no need of their assistance."

"Then I will wish you good evening," said Chatterton, and half held out his hand.

Lucy took no notice of his action. She gave him a very distant bow.

Then as she watched him disappear round the corner of the lane her suppressed emotion found vent in a little cry so full of agony that it might have touched the heart of even John Chatterton had he heard it, and she sank fainting to the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a rude awakening for her when she came to herself after her swoon. John Chatterton had done his work, and done it well, according to his own plans. The poor girl had never realised before how thoroughly she had allowed herself to be taken by the handsome young soldier, and it was only now, when love was forbidden, that she discovered that what she had taken for friendship was in fact love.

To know one loves when love is impossible is bad enough in itself, but to be told that you wish to taste the forbidden fruit and must not in so peculiarly harsh a way is worse still. The main impression left in her mind was that she might never again enjoy those happy walks and talks which had been the happiest period of her short life.

Luckily for herself she was a girl of some strength of character, and not inclined to give way to vain regrets. Setting before herself what she knew to be her duty, she determined that from that time forward she would neither, by word or deed, betray her own secret nor encourage Sidney Vere, should he attempt to resume those habits of close intimacy into which they had fallen previous to his departure on leave.

It was the old story, the moral of which is that he who loves and runs away loves to love another day.

Sidney Vere had chosen to flutter round this girl, and having done his best to destroy her happiness had run away and left her to conquer her disappointment as best she might. Not that he meant it. Men seldom do. It is not their nature to be cruel—they only get into the way of seeing too much of some young woman they never intend to marry, and then suddenly break off the connection, and unharmed themselves,

fancy that the weaker sex, too, escape unhurt. Sometimes it is so—oftener not.

It was a weary time for her, after her conversation with John Chatterton, and the rude shattering of her dreams of love. Never before had the round of household duty seemed so wearisome, or the petty annoyances of her daily life so tedious. Gradually, however, the mere force of habit dulled the pain, and, save that she was not so careless and bright as of old, there was little change. The outer world noticed nothing, and there was no one in her house either to notice anything wrong.

Sidney Vere returned to his regiment fully determined to have nothing more to say to Lucy. He had been strongly advised to have nothing to do with her by his uncle, who had heard all about his entanglement from Chatterton, and the counsel had sunk deeper than he thought, and Sidney stopped, as it were, on the very brink of an abyss, had shuddered and turned back. He fully realised now how thoroughly unfit the girl was to take her place in society as his wife, and saw that fifty pretty faces would not atone for one plebeian.

His general feeling was one of disgust with the sex in general for having disturbed his peace of mind, and let him into complications with his best friends, which he had never before experienced.

So he made his way back to Swimmerleigh, fully intending to have no more to say to any of them. At first he kept his promise to himself well enough. He avoided female society and took to outdoor sports with an energy which surprised everybody, spending whole days playing cricket with the local club, and never grumbling when asked to go long distances to play in uninteresting matches.

As long as this fit of zeal lasted well and good; he got on famously, and thought no more of his love affairs. He even got so far as to write and decline the invitation of the St. John Hares—friends of his uncle—to stay with them, urging, as an excuse, that he had been disappointed in his leave. He had to take the last leave to do it, but that did not matter much.

Presently, however, cricket came to an end, and the little sport there was in the immediate neighbourhood was soon exhausted; and then before hunting came a period of enforced idleness, highly dangerous to anybody in his state.

So it chanced that little by little he got tired of perpetual walks and rides, and began gradually to recall the existence of such a person as Lucy Stubbs, and to think how pleasant those rambles which he had had with her had been the year before. And so time having blunted his good resolution, he gradually began to wander in the direction of the Brighton-road.

The first time he passed the once familiar gate he felt something like a pang of remorse at his desertion of the pretty child who had trusted him so thoroughly.

The house looked cold and bleak that early October evening, and at first he thought it deserted, but the shrill tones of a scolding woman's voice pierced the quiet air, and he almost thought that he could hear the sweet voice, which he had once so liked to hear, answering. Whether it was fancy or not it gave vent to a flood of recollections, which, as he rode home, grew stronger and stronger.

The old story of poor Lucy's sorrows in her unhappy home was now fully remembered, and for the first time it occurred to him that he might have behaved harshly in acting as he had done.

That night at dinner he was moody and out of temper. His brother officers rallied him about his lack of spirit, but he answered so savagely that they saw it was best to let him alone.

Immediately after dinner he left the mess, and in his own room—having lit a pipe, and mixed a brandy and soda—gave full play to the thoughts which were oppressing him. The scene of his last parting from Lucy came back in all its reality, and with it came the recollection of the promise which he had so ruthlessly broken—the same thought of which now half-maddened him.

In his first flush of anger after his uncle's

warning he had boldly determined that he would have no more to say to her, and had stifled the pleadings of conscience.

Had he been wise enough to go to her on his return, and say that he did not care for her, and it was better that they should part, it would have been all right; but now that was impossible, and he appeared in her eyes as a man who had wilfully broken his word.

He looked at his watch with every intention of going off straight to ask her forgiveness. It was past twelve o'clock, he must wait till next day.

Even that seemed an age; and then, how about meeting her? She might be ill, or she might not come. Had he better write, and make an appointment?

Worn out at last by his conflicting emotions he turned into bed, and fell into a sound sleep, from which he was only awakened by his servant. As he dressed he debated whether he would write or not to Lucy to ask her to meet him that afternoon in the old place. On the whole he determined to trust to luck.

Never had a morning's duty seemed so long as on that day. The parade was insufferable; the colonel's temper was worse than usual; his horses and men were turned out like he did not know what—in fact, everything was wrong.

Of course, in reality, it was only himself; but that he did not take into consideration. At last one o'clock came, and he returned to his room, and, throwing down his sword with an oath, declared that another such day would drive him out of the service.

Launceon over he ordered his horse, and rode off to the Brighton-road. There was nobody in the little garden, and when he reached the Downs beyond he could not find Lucy. He waited for a full hour, and then returned to barracks in a worse temper than before.

Thus several days passed, and nothing happened. Day after day he rode out to the Downs, and day after day found nobody.

The fact was Lucy had seen him, and, determining to avoid him, purposely went another way. Of this, however, he, of course, knew nothing, and was only disgusted at his own want of success.

He was to have no better luck, however; and when, after many days of fruitless search, he wrote to her to ask her to make an appointment, as he had something of importance to communicate, the letter was returned opened in another envelope.

CHAPTER VII.

To be disappointed in a matter like this was the reverse of pleasant to a man of Vere's nature.

At first he fumed and fretted, then he tried to treat the whole affair with contempt, and, finally, he forgot all about it.

He managed to spend the first half of the leave season in tolerable comfort, and was not sorry when his own turn came to get away. His first visit was to his own estate, but he found a month of that, even with the assistance of a few genial bachelor friends, was quite enough, and by the beginning of February he had made up his mind to go up to town, and join his uncle and aunt.

There was one other visitor staying in the house, viz., Edith Hare, whose people were to come up to London rather later than usual that year, and who had accepted an invitation to stay with the Veres very readily indeed.

At first Sidney was annoyed at finding her there, but after a little he became reconciled to her presence, and after a good deal of persuasion on his aunt's part fancied he was in love with her, and actually proposed, and was accepted.

He was to leave the army and enter on his proper career as soon as he could get his papers; and as even courtship takes a certain amount of time, his leave was nearly over when he found himself an engaged man.

Meanwhile in another quarter things had been going in a way which, had he known it, would have exercised a very considerable effect on his feelings and actions.

Directly he left, John Chatterton, who had been on leave during the early part of the winter, and came back with the new year, set to work to carry out a scheme which he had long had in view, and which explained the interest he took in the doings of Lucy Stubbs and Sidney.

Like the latter he had been greatly struck by the girl's grace and beauty on the night of the mayor's ball, and he had at once determined to strike up an acquaintance with her.

In this he was forestalled by his younger rival, and hence the carefully-laid plan by which he had succeeded in parting the pair. At first he had chased under his inability to bring about a rupture, but after his chance meeting with the elder Vere, everything had been plain sailing.

In a short time he had the satisfaction of seeing his rival out of the field, and himself free to act as he pleased.

Even then his difficulties were considerable, and he had to face many disappointments in his attempts to make Lucy's acquaintance, or, rather, to renew the acquaintance which he had forced on her by his free use of Sidney's name.

All that autumn he had watched both her and Sidney with the most zealous care, to make sure there was no attempt at communication between them, and had seen with alarm Sidney's evident intention of renewing his intimacy with Lucy. Fortune again favoured him.

It was not till his return from leave that chance threw the opportunity he wished for in his way.

After Sidney's departure, which was duly noticed in the local paper, Lucy became freer in her movements, and again began to take her evening walks across the downs.

Here one day Chatterton found her. He was very good-looking, thirty years of age, and when he wished, could be exceedingly fascinating with the other sex.

At first Lucy had refused to have anything to say to him, but little by little she overcame this, and before very long they were almost intimate.

It did not take Chatterton long to discover that she was unhappy at home, and he so well and so quickly improved upon his knowledge of this fact that he made her, unknown to herself, think these afternoons walks the only happy time of her weary day.

Gradually the last vestige of her reserve vanished, and she began to feel almost the same confidence in him which she had once put in Sidney Vere.

So the days and weeks glided by, and though very little more than commonplaces had passed between them, Chatterton felt rather than knew that he was on a sufficiently strong footing with her to defy his former rival.

That, by the way, was a subject they seemed to have mutually agreed to avoid, and the very name of the absentee was never mentioned between them.

It was early in March when the announcement of Vere's engagement reached his regiment.

Chatterton pricked up his ears as he heard the paragraph read out of a letter to the Colonel, and began to wonder how he could best suit his own plans to the news which he had just heard.

After some hesitation he came to the conclusion that he would tell Lucy that Vere was engaged, and once and for all beyond her reach.

He never felt really sure, although he told himself that he did, that the reappearance of his rival might out him.

So that afternoon, when he reached the downs, he, as usual, found Lucy there.

After a few ordinary remarks he delivered himself of his news.

"We got some news about an old friend of yours to-day, Miss Stubbs," he said.

"Wao do you mean?" asked Lucy, quickly, the colour rising to her face.

"Sidney Vere is going to be married," said Chatterton, pretending not to notice her confusion.

"Sidney Vere going to be married!" she repeated, mechanically, as if rather stunned by the suddenness of the blow.

"Yes; to a Miss Hare," pursued the other, wishing to give her time to recover herself. "A

good match for her, too. I hear she has nothing but her face to recommend her, and that the settlements will all be on his side."

"Is she not a lady?" asked Lucy.

"Oh, yes; she is that!" was the answer, with a shrug of his shoulders. "She is just one of the class I most avoid—your very poor and very proud people, with a good name and position, and nothing on which to keep it up. I suppose however, it does not matter, as Vere has lots for both."

"So he is going to be married," said Lucy, both to herself. "Perhaps it is all for the best!"

"Very much for the best. He wants a wife to keep him in order, and now he has got one."

"I wonder if he cares for her very much?" said Lucy.

"Of course he does, or he would not want to marry her." Then suddenly jealousy got the better of him, and he asked, fiercely, "You don't mean to say that you still care for him, do you?"

"I don't know what you mean by caring for him, but I still like him. I always shall. He was so good and kind—so different from other people."

"Well, you had better put him out of your head now, at all events," said Chatterton, coolly.

"I put him out of my head a long time ago. Captain Chatterton, even if he was ever in it," answered Lucy. "I should have thought that our first conversation would have made that remark unnecessary."

Chatterton saw she was offended, and coarse and rough as his nature was, he had one soft spot, and somehow Lucy had managed to touch it. Dropping his rough manner at once, and taking her hand, he began in a very different strain.

"Lucy," he said, almost pleadingly, "take the advice of a friend, of something more than a friend, and really put this man away from you. I don't know in what relation he stood to you, but I am sure now that he has treated you badly, and I bitterly regret my share in his desertion, small as it was."

"Who said that he had treated me badly?" cried Lucy, indignantly.

"Never mind him now, Lucy, but listen to me. He can do no more for you—I can. Are you willing to share your life with me, to escape at once from the troubles at home which you have so often told me about, and in some brighter spot lead for ever a happier, better life?"

Lucy did not quite know what he meant, but thought she understood him to be asking her to marry him. Such a thought had never entered her head, and for a moment she paused ere she answered,—

"Do you mean to ask me to marry you?" she asked.

He hesitated, stammered, and said nothing. Lucy understood him.

"Captain Chatterton," she cried, "at least I thought you were sufficiently a gentleman not to insult a defenceless girl. Now I know you to be a wicked man, and I will never speak to you again."

"Very pretty, indeed!" said Chatterton, with a sneer. "Is this the way you treated Sidney Vere? Now I understand why he broke with you so suddenly."

"Sidney Vere was good and honest, which you can never be," she answered, indignantly. "Had he been here you would never have dared to say what you have."

In their excitement they had approached a small wood—possibly, too, their voices were somewhat raised.

Both started back as some one stepped out of the wood, and lifting his hat to Lucy, said quite coolly,—

"I heard some one asking for Sidney Vere? Here I am. What is it, Lucy? You look as if you had been crying."

In an instant Lucy forgot his coolness, his neglect, his desertion. She flew towards him, and nestling (as she had done once before almost in the same spot) in his arms, looked up in his

face and sobbed, "Sidney, save me from that wicked man!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It would be difficult to say which of the three were most embarrassed. John Chatterton was furious with himself for having shown his hand so coarsely as to entirely destroy his chance of bringing his pet scheme to a favourable conclusion. Lucy hardly dared look up after having, as she feared, betrayed her secret love for Sidney Vere, who, in his turn, was holding in his arms, and, to all intents and purposes, warmly caressing a beautiful young woman as if entirely oblivious of the fact that he was engaged to be married to somebody else, and that at no very distant period.

The embarrassment was shown by the silence which followed Lucy's appeal for aid. Chatterton turned away, and tried to smile the smile of unconcern with poor success. Vere whispered a word or two of comfort to Lucy, and then, turning to the other, threw down the gauntlet.

"Chatterton," he began, "perhaps you will explain what all this means?"

"I fail to see that there is anything to explain," said the other. "Just as much as I fail to see why you should constitute yourself for the nonce a knight-errant."

The sneer in the last sentence roused Sidney's anger. Restraining himself with difficulty, however, he answered, speaking slowly, and weighing his words,—

"You may try to put me off if you like," he said, "but I venture to say that there is a good deal to explain. I am walking towards the down when I am attracted by the sound of voices raised as if in dispute. I walk towards them, and find Miss Stubbs and yourself engaged in hot dispute; Miss Stubbs in tears, and on my appearance she throws herself into my arms and claims my protection in terms which are, to say the least of it, remarkable, and yet you have nothing to explain!"

"I decline to discuss the matter with you," said Chatterton, sullenly.

"Very well; Lucy, will you tell me?" asked Vere.

Poor Lucy blushed up to her eyes, and then answered, firmly,—

"Captain Chatterton was pleased to treat me as if—"

"Chatterton, do you mean to say you dared to hint such a thing?" exclaimed Vere.

"My dear Vere, it is exactly like yourself to jump at conclusions, and accept such very slender evidence as that offered."

"Your manner convinces me that what I suspect is true. All I can say is that your conduct is not that of a gentleman, and your sentiments such as no gentleman would endorse."

It was Chatterton's turn to be angry, but he, too, restrained himself, and merely murmured, "Very pretty."

"And," continued Vere, not heeding the remark, "I can only say that from henceforth I decline to number you among my friends. A man who can take a mean advantage of an innocent and defenceless girl is not fit to belong to the society of gentlemen, and I shall take every opportunity of avoiding you, and if you like, say why I do so."

"Vere, you are a fool!" said Chatterton. "In the course of conversation I let fall some remarks of rather a warmer nature than perhaps I ought to have, which Miss Stubbs was pleased to take as an offer of marriage, and while I was trying to hint that she had mistaken my meaning she jumped from that to a wrong conclusion. I assure you it was nothing more."

One look at Lucy's indignant eyes was sufficient to convince Vere that this was hardly a true version of the matter. He was very nearly saying so, but Chatterton had determined to carry the war into the enemy's country and began at once.

"And for yourself, while we are talking about men of honour, how comes it that while, on the one hand, we all know you to be engaged, I find you on such exceedingly intimate terms with this young—hem!—person. That also requires explanation."

It was Sidney now who looked uncomfortable. It was not his protestation of Lucy which troubled him, but the mention of Edith Hare. It was only a fortnight since his engagement, and he was already weary of her. Several times he had debated the advisability of writing to break off the engagement, and as often had decided not to do so.

As has already been shown, the match was rather of his aunt's choosing than his own, and already he would give half his income to be free again. He felt the mention of his *uncle's* name like a stab or an unpleasant reminder of a debt which is pressing, and which it is not convenient to pay.

"You know as well as I do that our meeting was accidental," he said, "and that Miss Stubbs' action was the result of something which you had said or done."

"True, for the time being," said Chatterton. "But I doubt if Miss Hare or her friends would quite approve of the obvious intimacy which exists at present. I should be more careful if I were you."

"In what, pray?"

"Why, I should take care to be off with the old love before I was on with the new."

"Miss Stubbs will hardly recognise herself under that title," said Vere, incisively.

"I thought as much, but I wished to word my remarks as politely as possible," sneered the other.

"Chatterton, you are a scoundrel. You know as well as I do that what you say is false."

"My dear Vere, you have no gratitude."

"Gratitude. What for?" asked Sidney. "For being insulted in fifty ways!"

"No. You are as dense as an owl. I was doing you a good turn when up you come, interfere in your most hectoring manner, and generally upset the coach."

"My so-called interference," said Sidney, "came none too soon. You cannot pretend that Miss Stubbs's manner ought not to have convinced you of your mistake."

"Maidenly coyness, my dear fellow," answered Chatterton, "which I venture to say would have soon vanished but for your unlucky interference."

"Chatterton, I repeat that you are a scoundrel," cried Vere. "You know Lucy to be as good and pure a girl as there is in all England, yet you persist in putting her in a most odious light."

"It is you who have put her in an odious light," retorted the other. "It was your conduct which first of all led me to act as I did."

Sidney Vere hung his head; in truth, his sins were finding him out. Engaged to one woman he did not love, accused, and justly, too, of trifling with and damaging the reputation of another, he was like an ass between two burdens. Like all men of quick impulses, he at once decided how his duty lay. It was for a moment, the struggle between Edith Hare, the representative of his own class, and Lucy Stubbs, the daughter of the people. The first, besides being absent, was disliked. She had no chance, and Lucy's claims carried the day.

He turned to where she stood with her hands clasped and her eyes cast down, the unwilling witness of this quarrel between her rival suitors, and, taking her hand, spoke in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Lucy," he said, "if you can forgive my neglect and the injury I have done you, let me make you the only reparation worthy of my fault. Will you marry me, and let me try by my future conduct to make up for what has happened? In this way, at least, we can show your traducer that what he thinks has no confirmation in fact. Will you be my wife?"

There was a moment's pause, a moment which, to all of them, seemed like a lifetime, as Lucy was considering her answer. For a short space love and inclination struggled against what she thought to be her duty, but then the sense of right—powerful to carry her through all difficulties—won the day, and she answered,—

"Thank you, Sidney. Captain Chatterton, turning to him, "you were base enough to make me an offer just now which you ought to have been ashamed of, and when upbraided by my friend here, you made your conduct worse by

charging me with things you knew to be false. Your conduct will bring its own reward in the future, and Heaven grant that no wretched woman may ever be persuaded to become your wife.

"For you, Mr. Vere, you hardly know what you are saying just now, and are carried away by excitement. Thank you all the same. When you marry Miss Hare," a slight falter shook her voice, but it recovered immediately, "I hope you may be as happy as you deserve, but I cannot let you either go without a word of warning. If ever you are blessed with sons, teach them to think twice ere they trifle with any woman's peace, and they will save much trouble to others and to themselves. From this time we are strangers. In future I shall look for friends among those of my own rank in life, for my experience of others has not been so pleasant as to make me ever wish to try again. Good-bye!"

The last words were addressed to Sidney, and she held out her hand. He would have spoken, but she waved her hand to stop him, and, without taking any notice of Chatterton, she walked away.

Both men stood there as if rooted to the ground, doubtless torn by conflicting emotions, and forgetting their quarrel of a few minutes before. But of the various feelings they experienced, by far this one was uppermost, namely, the feeling of a man who has engaged in a battle, confident of success, and then has got decidedly the worst of it. But Sidney did marry Miss Hare, and Chatterton died a bachelor.

[THE END.]

WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?

—102—

CHAPTER I.

It was a glorious day in June. The sun shone bright and warm on the green fields and winding, dusty country roads, over long stretches of waving corn and clover-meadows lying beyond. The sun ripened the apples and peaches in orchards, and the great red roses, toying purple lilac, and wisteria blooms in the old-fashioned gardens. But the most beautiful object on which its golden rays fell was a young girl leaning on a wicket-gate, anxiously watching the winding road that led over the hills to the village beyond.

She was the prettiest girl in Woodhaven. The slim, graceful figure in the pink lawn dress was perfect, from the tip of the dainty toe to the crown of the dark, curly head, which she carried so proudly.

She was a gay, bright, saucy young creature, with olive skin, a sparkling face of wondrous witchery, dimpled cheeks, and lips outrivalling the vivid crimson deep down in the hearts of the great red passion-flowers; small, white, pearly teeth, and black, velvety eyes, proud, sweet, yet half defiant in their glances; a girl who, by right of her glorious beauty, would, from among a thousand others, rivet the eyes of a stranger at once.

Beatrice Daly should have reigned queen of the great world of fashion, instead of being only the belle of Woodhaven.

She had scores of admirers, but few were brave enough to face the dragon of an aunt who stood grim sentinel over her, to ask if they might be permitted to pay their addresses to the beautiful young niece, after one of their number, Donald Lindsay, who had gone to Beech Cottage on just such an errand, had been so summarily ejected.

Donald was fair, handsome, a college graduate, and very gentlemanly. His father ran the only newspaper of which the village boasted; but somehow the paper did not flourish. The editor took in more poultry, butter and eggs from the farmers in exchange for his newsy little sheet than he did money.

The son, Donald, was a poet of no mean order. His verses appeared regularly, but they were only read by the few young girls of the village.

The farmers said he was a likely young fellow enough, and might amount to something in the future if he turned his white hands to the plough and his brain to crops, instead of jingling verses.

Donald had spent all of his boyhood and youth at college, the means being provided by a wealthy and eccentric old gentleman who had taken quite a fancy to the boy.

The first thing handsome Donald did when he returned to his native village to take his place in his father's office was to fall desperately in love with the beautiful Beatrice Daly. He commenced his wooing with passionate earnestness, but he made the mistake of his life by being straightforward and manly enough to first ask the aunt if he might call on Beatrice with the hope of some day winning the gloriously beautiful girl for his wife. The visit of the handsome young stranger and his audacious request amazed her, though she had known his family for years.

"Certainly not," she replied, with asperity.

The answer nearly took his breath away for an instant, but he did not lose his head.

"I know you might select many a wealthier suitor," he said, "but I hope to win wealth in time. I would start in with love and ambition—"

Miss Daly cut him short with a contemptuous snarl.

"Love and ambition!" she echoed. "A man should have much more than that nowadays before he asks a young girl to tie herself to him and face a hard, up-hill future."

"If every man waited until he had a competency there would be fewer early marriages," declared the young lover. "Surely you recognise that fact, Miss Daly?"

"Have you spoken on this subject to my—my niece?" she asked, sharply, after she had listened to their simple love story from beginning to end, the angry light in her eyes deepening.

"Not one word as yet," said Donald, hesitating.

"Then I forbid you to do so," she replied, tartly.

"But, my dear Miss Daly, think how I love Beatrice!" he pleaded, valiantly. "Surely you would not wreck the lives of two young people who love each other dearly!"

"Love each other!" cried Miss Daly, with unutterable scorn. "What is love but folly—a sentiment which lasts but a day, leaving people sadder and wiser! All the mistakes in the world are made by foolish people who are in love. I have no patience to listen to another word."

"Then you refuse to entertain the idea of my winning Beatrice for my wife!" he asked, rising, his hat in his hand.

"Most emphatically," she replied, grimly. "Consider the matter settled at once and for all. I absolutely refuse my consent."

Donald Lindsay looked at the stern, hard-set lips, which, he was sure, no man had ever had the temerity to kiss, even when their owner was young, and threw back his fair, handsome, boyish head and smiled.

"Then, my dear Miss Daly, I tell you frankly that I shall do everything in my power to win Beatrice without your consent. You have heard of the old adage: 'All is fair in love and war,' I presume. I cannot give your niece up."

"We shall see," was the curt reply; and he wondered at the strange look that crossed her face, leaving it faintly purple in spots.

Miss Daly arose, and with a stern mien rang the bell.

"Go!" she said, pointing to the door, "and never darken the door of Beech Cottage while I live: never attempt to see Beatrice again. If you do I shall resort to harsh measures!"

By this time the handsome young lover had learned that it was the most unwise thing that he could possibly have done—confess his plans to his enemy; he should have kept them to himself.

With a low bow he left the angry lady; but he had made up his mind to ask Beatrice to marry him at the first opportunity. He would obtain a special license so that if she consented he would do all in his power to urge her to marry him without an hour's delay. Then let Miss Daly rave as she might, she could not part them.

From behind the closed blinds Miss Daly

watched him depart. Donald Lindsay would have been struck with amazement could he have looked back into the room which he had just left and beheld its occupant. Miss Daly was pacing up and down the stuffy little parlour, trembling like a leaf.

"How strange that such a possibility as this never occurred to me before," she muttered. "Great Heaven! It would never do. Beatrice must not love—must not marry. I know why—yes, yes, I alone know why."

Her soliloquy was suddenly cut short by the entrance of the young girl herself.

"You ought to have been with me out in the garden a few minutes ago, Aunt Miranda," she cried, with a merry, rollicking laugh. "I have had such fun."

Miss Daly started. She knew well that Donald Lindsay had not gone into the garden, for she had watched him out of sight going over the road that led to the village. Before she had time to answer the girl went on.

"While I was standing by the sun-dial the strangest, most uncouth little old man that I ever beheld stopped at the gate and called to me for a glass of cold water from the well near by.

"You can come in and help yourself, if you choose," I answered. "I do not wait upon beggars."

"He hobbled in, and all the time he was drinking the water he was eying me curiously."

"A very proud young lady," he said; "but too much pride is ridiculous. I have no money to pay for the water," he said, after a moment's pause, "though it was worth a king's ransom to me; but, if you like, I will tell your fortune. Perhaps you would like to hear what a strange fate there is in store for you. I am an astrologist as well. I am on my way to the county fair."

"Surely you were not so foolish as to let him attempt it!" cried Miss Daly, white as death, springing forward and grasping the girl's rounded, dimpled arm.

"Why not!" laughed Beatrice, with a toss of her pretty curly hair. "Like all of Mother Eve's daughters I was born with a streak of curiosity, and, of course, I wanted to hear all about the future."

"Well," said Miss Daly, the terrible pallor still overspreading her face, and a look of intense fear in her shifting grey eyes, "what did he tell you? A pack of miserable falsehoods, of course."

Again the girl laughed a merry, rollicking laugh.

"First he insisted upon reading the future from the palm of my hand; but something he saw there, or said he did, held him spell-bound."

"Your life will be no ordinary one, my proud young lady," he said. "A great change is soon to come into your life."

"Am I to have a handsome lover, like other girls of my age?" I demanded.

"There are two lovers, and it will be hard to choose between them," he answered. "Ah, young lady," he cried in an awful whisper, "I—I will not tell you what else I see here. There are some things it is better not to know—a thousand times better. It is all coming to you soon—very soon."

"How soon?" I cried. "Do tell me."

"Before your eighteenth birthday," he answered.

"Then whatever is to happen must happen quickly," I said; "for I shall be eighteen next week. But do tell me what is to happen."

"He shook his shaggy head, muttered something which I could not catch, and dropped my hand."

"It is best for you not to know. In the time to come, when you look back at this hour, you will be thankful that I did not tell you."

"With that he was gone. I must hurry back to the well and rinse out the glass he used."

It was well that Beatrice did not look back as she danced merrily out of the room, and that she went quickly.

The door had scarcely closed upon her retreating form ere Miss Daly threw up her hands and fell fainting to the floor. She recovered consciousness before anyone discovered what had happened; then she went quietly up to her own

room and carefully locked the door. Shortly afterward there was an odour of something burning.

"Miss Daly is making a fire in her grate, and this a hot afternoon in June," thought the little housemaid. "Dear me, how eccentric she is. I wonder if I shall ever be an old maid, and if I were so unfortunate as to be one if I should become as cross and cranky as she is! Heaven forbid! It's a wonder that pretty, lively Miss Beatrice can endure it here. She is not allowed to have a single girl companion, and no lovers. I often wonder what Miss Daly is thinking of when she looks at the girl with a certain peculiar look in her eyes. Does she love Miss Beatrice or does she hate her?"

CHAPTER II.

ALTHOUGH Miss Daly had lived for nearly eighteen years in Woodhaven still very little was known of her by the simple country folk, for she went among them but rarely, and then only when it was absolutely necessary.

Years before she had suddenly appeared in the little hamlet accompanied by an infant but a few weeks old. She had bought Beech Grove Cottage, its isolation on the lonely road, fully a mile from the village, being its greatest recommendation.

She refused every advance of her neighbours toward intimacy; would not answer the door-bell even when the minister called, and never crossed the portal of the old ivy-covered church.

After fruitless attempts to be friendly the villagers at last left her alone in peace. But they often wondered about the little child, and asked one another how she was faring in the keeping of this dark, taciturn, mysterious woman, who announced herself to be the little one's aunt.

Years rolled on, and the little child, who came occasionally to the village with Miss Daly was observed to be growing into an unusually lovely girl. She did not go to school with the village children; Miss Daly taught her at home, devoting her whole life to this one object.

The hard-working village folk had found out but one thing regarding Miss Daly's business, and that was that she regularly received remittances twice a year.

The years glided on almost imperceptibly, and almost before Miss Daly could realise what had occurred, she found herself with a tall slip of a young girl on her hands—a girl as gloriously beautiful as a dream, and as bright and joyous, despite her gloomy surroundings, as a veritable sunbeam.

The young men of the village were the first to make this discovery, and fairly haunted the road that led past the cottage.

Some, more brave than the rest, made it a point to stop at the cottage on one excuse or another, always choosing the time when Miss Daly was seen jogging her old grey mare toward the town.

Thus it was that, entirely without her aunt suspecting it, Beatrice Daly came to know most of the young people for miles around.

Miss Miranda Daly, the stern old aunt, although more than sensible in most things, had made a fatal error in one thing—she had fostered in the girl ideas altogether too lofty for her station in life.

She had a strange mania for talking to the girl of grand castles and great wealth and grandeur, until, hearing of it so constantly, the girl grew to long for the companionship of titled ladies, lords, dukes, and belted earls.

It was but a few weeks before our story opened that Beatrice had met Donald Lindsay, and in a very romantic fashion, too.

Feeling lonely in her aunt's absence one afternoon she had gone down to the thickly wooded grove just at the back of the orchard to search for a nightingale's nest, which she felt certain must be in one of the wide-spreading beech-trees which she could so plainly see from her own little bedroom window, for the bird always flew toward a particular bough.

(Continued on page 421.)

A PLAIN GIRL.

—so—

CHAPTER XXXV.

As for affairs in India, all this time, there had been no severe fighting yet; for the moment grim-visaged war had smoothed his wrinkled front, and we fancied that we could catch faint, desultory notes, as from the pipes of piping peace, we were only too eager to believe in the truth of these charming sounds—lend a ready ear to a consummation so much to be desired.

There was a general resting on their oars as far as the force in Afghanistan was concerned. I had no need at present to be very anxious about George, and my mind was more at liberty to be very angry with him, and I was.

A time went on he did not condescend to take the slightest notice of "George Phillip" by letter or message, even although in a sudden foolish burst of maternal pride I had had his photo taken—when he had reached the ripe age of four months—and despatched a copy to India.

After it was gone I was very sorry I had sent it, but my regrets were too late and of no use. Who ever gets anything back from the post-office?

I went over to Park-lane constantly, was left there by my mother-in-law, and sent home in state in grandmamma's brougham. The distance was very trifling, and I could easily have walked, but neither of the old ladies would listen to the suggestion—Mrs. Karslake, because she was of her honour not to trust me out of her sight alone—grandmamma, because she considered me too young and pretty to walk about unattended.

She seemed to think a great deal of my visits now, and I really spent as much time with her as I could possibly spare.

I read to her, told her all the little bits of chit-chat I could think of, collected from Miranda's lips at sundry meal-times. I set up her knitting, picked up dropped stitches, wrote her notes, did all her small commissions, brought her flowers, periodicals, new photos, and was as useful to her as I knew how to be. One thing alone she never could prevail on me to do—only one thing, and that was to open the piano, and sit down to it and sing.

"And you have such a good voice, child, and I'm so fond of music—singing especially; and, really, after the small fortune I spent upon your masters at Madame Duverne's you surely have not given it up?" very irritably.

"No, I used to sing a great deal at Sandgate. I was quite the regimental *prima donna*; but I have never sung, much less opened a piano, since last September."

"That's all sentimental rubbish," snapped the old lady, with a spic of her ancient fire. "Just go over to the piano at once—I insist—and if you can't sing and won't sing, at least play. Play something soft and slow—it soothes me."

I obeyed, and placed my unpractised fingers on the keys, and gradually things came back to me. I played one or two of Schumann's shorter pieces—vague, melancholy, weird melodies—one or two of Mendelssohn's songs without words: played till "The brougham for Mrs. Karslake" interrupted me, and for the future half-an-hour at the piano was always a portion of my duties at grandmamma's.

It was August before we left town; Miranda wished to see the season out to the bitter end, and many and many a weary night did she keep her unlucky old mother out of bed till it was daylight, convoying her from one crowded party to another.

I was well out of it all. When they were preparing to sail forth I was preparing to retire for the night; and when Miranda appeared at luncheon next day she generally looked as cross as two sticks, and as yellow as a lemon, and made nothing but uncomplimentary remarks about the preceding evening's entertainment.

It was often on the tip of my tongue to say "Then why do you go?" but fortunately I restrained. Miranda had a temper like her brother, and in a serious war of words I would be nowhere.

She was handsome, in a cold, hard, dark style,

and I should have as soon have thought of marrying a fly-blister if I were a man.

I was extremely glad to get away from hot, glaring, stifling London to the nice shady, green country; but grandmamma was in a dreadful state of mind at my departure. She made me solemnly promise to return from time to time and see her, and this I promised to do if Mrs. Karslake had no objection.

She ruled me as George's deputy; but I must admit that I did not feel my bonds press very heavily. I, on my part, ruled her by means of George, junior, and I did not want to go to dances, and dinners, or the theatre.

I never languished for gaiety; I was now as staid and as subdued as any old woman of seventy, so that being kept in the background fell in with my own wishes and Miranda's. Miranda had no desire that I should ever shine by her side in the social circle.

I knew this, and when people were expected to lunch, or dropped in to afternoon tea, I never appeared.

Down in the country it was different; I liked the more open, easy life. I no longer lived in my very own sitting-room, like a bear in a cage; I spent most of my time out-of-doors, coming in and out as I pleased, and falling more into my place, and into general view, as one of the family.

Karslake was the name of the place—a fine old country seat, quite buried in a park five miles from a station, and a mile from the church and village. It belonged to Sir Anthony, George's uncle, who never lived in it himself, and kindly lent it to Mrs. Karslake for any time she pleased.

Miranda could not bear it. It was too quiet and dull for her, though we had a good many county neighbours—too rural, too far from town; and as I had never heard much about it I was most agreeably amazed when I made its acquaintance.

The house was old and rather ugly. A variety of owners had added to it, and improved (?) it to their individual taste; but it was very large and comfortable, and, for such a big place, homelike. The park, spreading far away all round, was charming; the gardens delicious.

I really began to feel something like myself again, as, with a big hat on my head and only a dog for company, I roamed about the place, made raids upon the flower-beds, or sat under a big haycock reading the last new novel.

We had company. Carriages full of visitors came darting, wending up the long avenue, that curled like a big grey serpent through the park; but Mrs. Karslake and Miranda entertained them. I think my existence was barely guessed at, for I did not go to church with the family, and appear in that public place—the family pow.

I allowed baby's nurse to go in the morning, along with the upper servants, and I went alone, in the afternoon, walking across the fields, in the cool time of the day, and sitting, not in the big Karslake pew, but in one of the free sittings. I did not identify myself in public with the family.

There were various junketings, in which I took no part, tennis and garden-parties. On these occasions I made it a point to keep well out of the way.

I'm sure I was not missed, and I learnt, indirectly (long afterwards), that in answer to any casual polite inquiries, my fair Miranda always said that "her sister-in-law was an invalid, and could not bear society."

When one of Miranda's "afternoons" was impending I generally took a book, and set out, immediately after luncheon, for a long stroll through the woods, resting at intervals in different chosen spots.

One particular day, about five o'clock, I was sitting on the steps of an old time-ruined tea-room, or temple, with my hat off, my dog making a mat of my dress, and my whole attention absorbed in a thrilling story. All at once I heard distant sounds of high sopranos, laughing and talking, and one or two twifled basses responding thereto.

Could it be the garden-party coming up, all the way to the Folly, merely for the sake of having nothing else to do?

I started up, aghast. There was no escape for me, for the only pathway leading to my high-ro

SUNLIGHT & LIFEBOUY SOAP COMPETITIONS.

The first of these Monthly Competitions will be held January 30th, 1897, to be followed by others each Month during 1897. Competitors sending in the most coupons win the best prizes, but every competitor sending in not less than 50 Sunlight or 50 Lifebuoy coupons wins a prize.

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1. Competitors may enter EACH or EVERY MONTH for EITHER of BOTH "Sunlight" or "Lifebuoy" Competitions, but must send in the "SUNLIGHT" or "LIFEBOUY" Coupons in SEPARATE PACKETS.

2. For this competition the United Kingdom will be divided into 7 Districts, and the Prizes will be awarded every month during 1897 in each of the 7 Districts as stated below.

3. Competitors to send in "SUNLIGHT SOAP" or "LIFEBOUY SOAP" Wrappers as they may collect. Cut off the top portion of each wrapper, containing the word "SUNLIGHT SOAP" or "LIFEBOUY SOAP." Enclose with these (called "Coupons") a sheet of paper stating Competitor's full name and address, and the number of coupons sent in, and forward same (see Rule 1) postage paid to Lever Brothers, Limited, Port Sunlight, near Birkenhead, marked on the Postal Wrapper (top left-hand corner) with the NUMBER of the DISTRICT Competitor lives in, and the word "SUNLIGHT" or "LIFEBOUY," whichever contains the packet contains.

4. The competition will CLOSE the LAST DAY of EACH MONTH. Coupons received too late for one month's competition will be put into the next. All parcels on which postage has not been fully paid WILL BE REFUSED.

5. Competitors who obtain wrappers from unsold soap in dealer's stock will be disqualified. Employees of Lever Brothers, Limited, and their families are debarred from competing.

6. A printed list of winners in competitor's District will be forwarded to competitors in about 8 weeks after each monthly competition closes.

7. Lever Brothers, Limited, will endeavour to award the prizes fairly to the best of their ability and judgment, but it is understood that ALL WHO COMPETE AGREE TO ACCEPT THE AWARD of Lever Brothers, Limited, as final.

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District.

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4	WALES, LANCASHIRE, CHESHIRE.
5	NORTHUMBERLAND, DURHAM, WEST-MORLAND, CUMBERLAND, YORKSHIRE, ISLE OF MAN.
6	SHROPSHIRE, HEREFORDSHIRE, MONMOUTHSHIRE, STAFFORDSHIRE, WORCESTERSHIRE, GLoucestershire, DERBYSHIRE, LEICESTERSHIRE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, OXFORDSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, BERKSHIRE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, BUTLERSHIRE, LINCOLNSHIRE, HUNTINGDONSHIRE.
7	SUFFOLK, ESSEX, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, BEDFORDSHIRE, HERTFORDSHIRE, HAMPSHIRE, ISLE OF WIGHT, CHANNEL ISLANDS, WILTSHIRE, DORSETSHIRE, SOMERSETSHIRE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, DEVONSHIRE, CORNWALL.

PRIZES FOR SUNLIGHT COUPONS.

The 1 Competitor in each District who sends in the largest number of Sunlight Coupons from the District in which he or she resides, will receive £1 cash.

The 10 Competitors in each District who send in the next largest number will each receive, carriage paid, at winner's option, a Lady's or Gentleman's "Premier" Bicycle, price £21.

The 20 Competitors in each District who send in the next largest number will each receive, at winner's option, a Lady's or Gentleman's Rolled Gold Watch, price £4 4s.

The remaining Sunlight Competitors will each receive Cloth-bound Books, by Popular Authors, in the proportion of 1 Book for every 50 Sunlight Coupons sent in.

Total Prizes for Sunlight Coupons during 1897

PRIZES FOR LIFEBOUY COUPONS.

The 1 Competitor in each District who sends in the largest number of Lifebuoy Coupons from the District in which he or she resides, will receive £2 1s cash.

The 5 Competitors in each District who send in the next largest number will each receive, carriage paid, at winner's option, a Lady's or Gentleman's "Premier" Bicycle, price £21.

The 20 Competitors in each District who send in the next largest number will each receive, at winner's option, a Lady's or Gentleman's Rolled Gold Watch, price £4 4s.

The remaining Lifebuoy Competitors will each receive Cloth-bound Books, by Popular Authors, in the proportion of 1 Book for every 50 Lifebuoy Coupons sent in.

Total Prizes for Lifebuoy Coupons during 1897

GRAND TOTAL of all Prizes given for Sunlight and Lifebuoy Coupons, 1897

* The Bicycles are the celebrated Helical (Spiral) Tube "Premier" Cycles, 1897 Pattern, manufactured by the New "Premier" Cycle Company, Ltd., of Coventry, and 14 Holborn Viaduct, London, fitted with Pneumatic Tyres and accessories.

† These are 14-carat Half-hunter Rolled Gold Watches, jewelled, 4-plate.

Total Prizes in all Districts during 1897.	
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14,112	0 0
10,000	0 0
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FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 13, 1897.

[PRIOR ONE PENNY.]



"THAT'S MOTHER CALLING," SAID THE GIRL, AS SHE TURNED TO LEAVE; "I MUST GO TO HER."

A NOBLE RENUNCIATION.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

On a still afternoon in early summer, and in one of the quietest corners of a small country town in the south of England, a young girl was standing beside the gate of a semi-detached villa of unpretentious size—a beautiful girl, too, in a way—not exactly the refined beauty which we are accustomed to associate with high rank, but a rustic belle, in the full enjoyment of glorious health.

As she stood there in perfect repose, watching the casual passer-by, you might have been tempted to credit her with a greater share of loveliness than she actually possessed, for the

tall, slim figure, with its well-fitting dress, hovering, however, on the borders of good taste, and the well-set head and luxuriant auburn hair, showed to the best advantage in its absolute repose.

If one had watched the changes on the pretty face he would have almost been inclined to say that the girl's beauty was probably her only point. The look of a spoilt child or petted beauty was stamped clearly upon it, and yet looked again, and looked carefully, there were many points about it which seemed to promise better things.

At times a firm expression came over the face, a look of strong will and of purpose, which quite changed it, and appeared to lay out hopes of better things than the first casual glance had foreshadowed.

Apparently to-day she had nothing to do but watch the lane and its passers-by, the listlessness of her attitude, and careless expression of her

face, seeming to show how little she had to occupy her.

Presently, however, her expression changed, and a look of interest came over the careless face. From the far end came the sound of a horse's feet falling slowly on the ear, and presently the animal itself turned the corner.

Riding along slowly, his hands scarcely doing more than support the reins which lay idly on the horse's neck, came a young fellow of about three-and-twenty. From his clean-shaved face and its long, fair moustache, his square shoulders and well-set-up figure, as well as from the cut of his clothes, you could at once recognise the soldier.

The handsome bay thoroughbred which he was riding seemed to be in perfect accord with him, for as his master sat listlessly on his back occupied with his thoughts, the horse slowly picked his way down the lane as quietly as a bishop's pawn-hack, and to all appearance as innocent of initiating

the slightest movement without his rider's full consent.

The girl was half hidden, or more from the horse and his rider, by a large bush which stood on one side of the gateway. As they reached her she drew slightly back, and her moving frightened the thoroughbred. With a snort he jumped to the other side of the road, nearly throwing his rider, who was quite taken by surprise in doing so.

The girl gave a slight scream at seeing what she took to be the other's imminent danger, and so called attention to herself.

The horseman cast a rapid glance across the road, saw what appeared to be a very pretty girl in a charming attitude of terror, quitted his horse, and then approached the gate.

"I am afraid," he began, lifting his hat, "that we have frightened you between us."

"Oh, no! At least you seemed to be going to—?" Then not liking to carry the sentence to its legitimate end she hesitated.

"Fall off," he said, finishing it for her, and laughing the while. "Very near, it is true, but not quite. I don't know what frightened Sultan. He is not given to shying."

The merry face and laughing blue eyes reassured the girl, and she began to laugh, too.

"I am glad you didn't, as it might have been a bad accident," she said. "I am always so frightened when I see horses getting restless." She meant restive.

"Sultan never is restive," said the other, patting his favourite's glossy neck. "I don't think he knows how to be. Besides, a spill is not nearly such a terrible thing as you think. I've had dozens."

"Have you?" The beautiful eyes opened to their fullest extent. "And were you never hurt?"

"Sometimes a bit stiff after them, nothing more," was the answer.

"Lucy! Where are you?" came from the semi-detached villa. "I want you at once."

"That's mother calling," said the girl as she turned to leave. "I must go to her."

"Good-bye," said the youth, and he raised his hat.

"Good-bye," said the maid as she disappeared, leaving the other in the position of the boy who had just enough milk-and-water to make him wish for more.

He felt a bit angry with himself as he went on his way, because he had not been able to detain her, though, after all, he had not any excuse for doing so. It is only right to add that for the remainder of his ride he thought a good deal more about the girl and his little adventure than he had any right to do, while she on her part could not get the face of the soldierly stranger with the laughing blue eyes and the long fair moustache out of her head, and had to be reproved several times in the course of the afternoon for the carelessness with which she set about the household duties given her by her mother. The master ought to have ended there, but unfortunately it did not do so.

CHAPTER II.

If to have been born heir to twenty thousand a-year, and to have succeeded to one's inheritance at three years of age constitutes happiness, Sidney Vere might be termed a happy man.

The only child of the old age of the head of one of the oldest families in —shire, he had lost his mother at his birth, and his father three years later. His estates, large enough when he succeeded to them, had been carefully nursed by his guardians, and when, after a course of Eton and Sandhurst, he passed into the "Royal Piicks"—as the famous cavalry corps to which he was posted was called—he had not long to wait before he found himself absolute master of an income which few men in the army nowadays can boast of.

It was never intended either by himself or his guardians that he was to make a profession of soldiering; what was wanted was a means of

passing those few years of a man's life in which he goes from boyhood to manhood, and it was thought he could have his fling as well in a crack cavalry regiment destined for a good round of English stations as elsewhere. Not that he had in any way been wild. On the contrary, he was so quiet and gentlemanly that his uncle, who was also his guardian, was rather apt to say that "the lad had no 'go' in him," while his aunt held him up as a model young man, and quoted him as such.

In his regiment he was popular, and rather looked up to by his brother subalterns, not because he was a leader among them, but because he was eminently "good form," while the serious liked him as a man who was certain to uphold the credit of his corps.

At dinner that night he was, contrary to his usual habit, rather silent and preoccupied, so much so, indeed, that he was rallied about it by the rest of his brother officers. He was able by pulling himself together to join in the conversation, though ever and anon he seemed to be wandering away from his surroundings.

The fact was that a little figure dressed in a pretty blue dress, with a pretty face, on which was a half shy, half saucy smile as the lips framed the words "good-bye," would keep rising before his eyes.

"Well, which of you are going to this dance at the Town Hall to-night?" asked the grey-headed colonel, when the wine was placed on the table, and the servants had withdrawn. "I think someone ought to represent the corps. It's the mayor's birthday, or some such thing, and as the townspeople have been civil, and Alderman Gubbins made a strong point of it, I almost promised some of us would turn up. You can go in uniform if you like."

There was a pause. No one seemed inclined to go.

"Well, come," resumed the Colonel, "I'll go myself. Who'll come too? Three more will be quite enough, and I can drive you."

Sidney Vere looked up from the end of the table.

"I'll make one, Colonel," he said.

A titter ran round the room. Sidney was a first-rate dancer, and sufficiently fastidious to hate mixed public entertainments, besides being too shy to mix freely with strangers.

"You'll need to cheer up a bit," said Chatterton, one of the captains who was sitting opposite to him, "or you won't be particularly good company. I'll make another, Colonel. It will be amusing to see how Vere gets through it."

A fourth was quickly found, and a conveyance having been procured, the four started amidst the cheers, chiefly derisive, of their comrades.

Deposited at the door of the Town Hall their arrival caused some sensation, which they had not calculated on. A guard of honour of the local volunteers, who had greeted the mayor on his arrival with the usual salute, woke up and seized the opportunity of the arrival of the military bigwig to present arms again. Then Alderman Gubbins, very red in the face and hot from his exertions, and decorated by a huge white rosette, came bustling out and received them with effusion, shaking hands with a scrunch that made the Colonel wince, and Sidney Vere regret that he had come.

The good man insisted on their at once joining the aristocracy of the place, and marched the four of them right up to the very extremity of the room.

They arrived just as the dancers were commencing a quadrille, and as he passed along Vere thought he caught sight of a pretty face he had seen before among the many heads which turned to see who the new arrivals were.

The quadrille finished, and the four officers having exhausted the few topics, such as the weather, on which they could meet the old ladies on equal terms, found the dais flooded by younger beauties, several of whom cast eager glances towards the figures in uniform.

Before he well realized it Vere found he had led out one of the mayor's daughters and the youngest Miss Gubbins, the first of whom had just grasped the rudiments of high art, and the

second had not an idea beyond dancing. He was just pausing after his exertions, and beginning to wish himself in bed, when he was button-holed by the alderman in person.

"Not done yet, Captain?" he began. "I hope you are not tired already."

"Not at all, Mr. Gubbins," said Vere, heartily wishing his entertainer anywhere out of the way.

"I am enjoying myself immensely."

"Gone partner for the next waltz!"

"I am sorry to say I have not. I was thinking of resting—"

"Get you one at once," cried the other, utterly drowning the feeble plea his victim was beginning. "Lots of pretty girls here. Take your pick," and he waved his hand round the room.

"You're very good," said Vere, determined to make a virtue of necessity. "I think I should like to be introduced to that young lady in pink over there."

While he was speaking his eye had wandered round the room, and lighted on the form of his friend of that afternoon.

The old alderman looked a little surprised, for the owner of the pink dress was not by any means within the pale of good society in Swinmerleigh.

"All right," he said. "I don't know the lady, but as I'm a steward it's all right. Come along."

It was a little trying at the best of times to be led across half the length of a big room, and then brought face to face with a stranger.

Vere's uniform and the clank of his spurs attracted more than the usual attention, and half the eyes in the room were fixed on him, as Alderman Gubbins, in a loud voice and some flourish, proclaimed his mission.

"Allow me to introduce Captain Vere, Miss —." He paused for a minute, while his charge deftly caught him up saying,—

"May I have the pleasure of the next dance?"

"I am afraid I am engaged for the next to Mr. Jones," said his fair friend of that afternoon, pointing to an insipid youth, whom Vere at once recognised as a clerk in the local bank.

"Can you give me one later?" pursued Vere.

"I'm not engaged for number eight," was the answer.

Vere took her card and wrote his name down.

The dance was the next but two, and with a bow he slipped away to the refreshment-room to keep out of further harm's way.

As the band struck up the introduction to "Sweethearts" he again entered the ball-room, and easily found his partner. A minute later they were flying down the room.

Vere was a very good dancer, and to-night he was enjoying himself. He found his partner could dance well too, and the turn was a long one. At last his partner pleaded for a rest.

"I hope I have not tired you?" he said, as he led her to a quiet corner of the room.

"Not a bit. It was lovely!" she said, giving him the full benefit of her beautiful eyes. "I never enjoyed a dance so much before."

"Well, I suppose I must take that as a compliment," laughed Vere; "but let me tell you you dance well too, or we could not have managed so well."

It was rather a conceited speech, as he thought afterwards, but at the time it seemed all right. The girl took it quite seriously.

"I wish everyone danced like you," she said. "Half one's partners only stamp round one, a good many tear one's dress, and once my partner fell down in the middle of the room, and pulled me over too."

"What a catastrophe!" said Vere, unconsciously mimicking her tone of horror at the mishap. "I am glad I did not see it."

"Now you are laughing at me," she said.

"On the contrary, I mean it. I never was more serious in my life. But come, one turn more," and they were off again.

At the end of that dance Vere secured another, and then another, until people began to stare at the couple, and the ill-natured to make remarks.

The hours flew by so quickly that Vere was quite surprised when the band struck up "God

"Save the Queen," and the last of the dancers prepared to depart. He got his partner her cloak, and gave her his arm as far as the hall, where he found an elderly lady with two plain daughters, who had been particularly active all night, waiting for them.

"I hope you are ready at last," said the forbidding female, with some severity, and a slight stress on the word *in italics*.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting, Aunt Mary," said Lucy. "I am quite ready now."

Vere helped her into the dy which was waiting outside, and wished them "good-night."

Just before they drove off the aforementioned Jones bounded down the steps, and called out,—

"Good-night, Miss Stubbs."

"Good-night, Mr. Jones," answered the clear voice of Miss Lucy.

"Lucy Stubbs!" thought Vere, as he stood alone on the steps. "Not a very aristocratic name. However, she's a dear little woman, and her name does not matter much."

He lit a cigar, and throwing his coat over his arm was just preparing to start to walk back when he heard his name pronounced behind him.

"Ready to go home, Vere?" asked Chatterton.

"We'll walk together."

"You still here, Chatterton?" asked the other, in surprise.

"Yes. The Colonel said he was sure you were enjoying yourself with your little friend in pink, so he would not disturb you when he left, and I volunteered to stay and see you did not get into mischief."

There was just enough of a sneer in the last sentence to make Vere resent it; but he pretended he did not notice it, and on his answering "all right" the pair started together to walk home.

CHAPTER III.

SIDNEY VERE turned into bed that morning with very mixed feelings. They say stolen fruits are always sweetest, and possibly the knowledge that he had been doing something out of the common made him overrate the pleasure of Miss Stubbs' society.

As he dozed off to sleep confused ideas of angels in the shape of pretty girls in pink dresses, and demons, who generally took the form of Captain Chatterton, kept running through his brain; but, above all the sneer about "mischief" stuck to him, and gave an unpleasant turn to his dreams that morning.

There was nothing for him to do that day, so he did not turn out till breakfast time.

There was nobody in the room but the Colonel, who good-naturedly rallied him about his dancing the night before, and was greatly amused when he heard at what hour he came home.

The day passed in the ordinary way, except that he spent the afternoon at a tennis party, at a house which lay in the exact opposite direction to the Brighton-road, where Miss Stubbs lived. Somehow he felt inclined to go home that way, but it would have been absurd to make a circuit of three miles on the chance of getting as many words with a young woman whom he had never seen till the day before.

The next day was Sunday. As he marched with his troop up to the old parish church he caught a glimpse of a figure he thought he knew disappearing up the steps of the organ loft, and when he got to his place in the front he saw right enough that Miss Lucy was placed in the front row of the choir. As he looked up he caught her eyes, and the collision resulted in a very becoming blush.

During the rest of the service his efforts to attract her attention were quite useless. She kept her eyes fixed on her book.

Outside, however, as the party were being formed up she tripped past him, and acknowledged his salute with a bow and a smile.

The incident did not escape the keen eyes of the rector's wife, who was watching the party march off, and caused some surprise on her part.

It was not until late on Monday afternoon that Sidney Vere found himself again in Brighton-road. Sultan, as usual, was sauntering along

very quietly, and his rider lost in thought, when just as he reached the end of the road the horse was surprised by a sharp cut with Sidney's cane on his flank.

The truth was a gate about half-way down swung open, and a trim little figure appeared, and began to walk quickly down the road in the opposite direction to the horse and his rider. It was not long, however, before they overtook the fugitive.

Miss Stubbs greeted them with a sunny smile as Sidney began, rather hesitatingly, to express his surprise at meeting her there.

"I always take a walk about this time," was Lucy's answer. "After all my work is done mother lets me go out for an hour or two, and I generally walk towards the downs. It is quiet there."

"By work I suppose you mean the various nothings which ladies call an occupation?" said Vere.

"I don't know what ladies' nothings are," she answered; "but my work is real. You see mother is so often ill that I have to keep house and look after the children too, and sometimes they are very troublesome."

The smile had faded, and a serious look came over the pretty face. Vere hastened to continue.

"You must be an awfully nice housekeeper for anybody," he said. "My ideas of housekeepers are stout old ladies with large bunches of keys, and cupboards where they keep jam and other nice things, at least, that last is a reminiscence of my boyhood. But seriously, Miss Stubbs, do you walk every evening on this road?"

"Yes," she answered. "I like it best of any about here. This lane we are in is so beautiful that I never tire of it."

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," quoted her companion. "I quite agree with you. It is a lovely view."

As he spoke they reached the end of the lane, where it opened on to the downs themselves—a broad expanse of lovely green sward, sloping away near where they stood to a well-wooded valley, in which nestled the picturesque home-steads.

Beyond again rose the dim outlines of dark forest, through the uppermost trees of which came the red and gold light of a lovely sunset.

Both paused, as if instinctively, to watch the glorious beauty of the scene. For a couple of minutes neither spoke, and then it was over. The gold faded as the sun sank below the distant hill, the light disappeared with it, and the red glow alone remained as a token of departed glory.

Vere slid off his horse's back, and threw the reins over his arm. Then turning to Lucy he asked if she were going to walk any farther. At first she demurred.

"I don't usually stay out so late," she said, "but it was such a beautiful evening that I could not resist."

"All the more reason not to go home now," said Vere. "There is a good hour yet of sufficient light to walk, and on such a warm night it is a pleasure to be out of doors."

After a little hesitation Lucy gave in, and the pair wandered across the downs, Sultan following quietly at the length of his rein. At first both were a little shy and reserved, but as the time passed this thawed, and soon they were chatting away gaily like old friends.

The hour passed so pleasantly that they had no idea how late it was till the clock at the Town Hall striking seven warned them how long they had been walking. Lucy gave a little cry of dismay.

"Father will be wondering why I have not come to tea," she said. "It's long past his time."

"We had better walk as fast as we can," said Vere, not without misgivings of his own about the questions likely to be provoked by a late appearance at dinner. "We can get back quickly straight across the downs."

"Very well," she answered. "I'll walk my best."

About half-way across the sound of horse's hoofs on the turf caught Vere's attention. He looked up as the new arrival passed, and though

it was dusk, and the horseman a hundred yards off, he plainly recognised Chatterton's chestnut hunter "Maxwell," and had no doubt who the rider was. This circumstance rather disconcerted him, as thus for a second time the latter had come across him alone with Miss Stubbs.

As they neared the end of the Brighton-road Lucy stopped and held out her hand.

"I'll say good-bye here," she said, with a slight blush.

Vere would have liked to brazen it out, and walk with her up to her own gate, as if there were nothing unusual in his doing so. He determined to propose it.

"I am not going to let you walk home by yourself," he said. "I must see you in."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because it is now nearly dark, and as I have kept you out I am responsible for seeing you get safely home," he said, "so come along."

"Really I would rather you did not," said Lucy, getting now very much embarrassed. "I am sure you won't come if I ask you not to."

"But why?" said Vere, his spirit of opposition aroused.

"Because you are an officer and I a shopkeeper's daughter, if I must tell you," said poor Lucy. "The neighbours would talk, and father himself would be angry at my walking with you," and the tears began to rise.

"I did not mean to hurt you," said Vere, now very contrite. "I am very sorry indeed I asked you. You are quite right. I gain nothing and you lose a great deal."

"Then you won't come?" asked Lucy.

"I'm not quite such a brute as that," he said. "If you ask me not to do a thing I shall not do it, of course, but in return tell me when you will come for another walk!"

"Don't you think this had better be the last?" she asked, looking at him bravely in the face.

"Why should it?" was his questioning answer.

"Because you and I are not ever likely to meet elsewhere. You belong to one rank of life and I to another," she answered.

Vere laughed rather more boisterously than easily.

"What does that matter? Why don't you tell the truth, and say that we have had a stupid walk, and you want to avoid such another evening?" he said.

"No, no!" she cried, more earnestly than caution warranted, "I am sure you must not think so. I have enjoyed my walk very much."

"So much that you won't come again?" said Vere.

"What a tease you are, to be sure!" she said, dropping unconsciously into her vulgar manner.

"Then you'll come?" he asked, pressing his advantage.

For an instant she wavered. Then holding out her hand she said,—

"Very well, on Thursday."

"And where shall I meet you?" he asked.

"By the old oak at the end of the lane."

"And the time?"

"Four o'clock," was Lucy's answer. "And now really I must say good-night," and she held out her hand.

"Good-night," he said, and taking her hand drew her quickly towards him; then bending down he kissed her. For a moment she resigned herself to him, then recovering, drew back.

"I won't come if you don't promise not to do that again," she cried, half inclined to be vexed, half not knowing what to say, and breaking away she ran off down the lane.

"Mind you are punctual," was his answer.

It was now more than half-past seven, and they dined at eight up at the barracks; so vaulting on to Sultan's back, he pressed him into a smart trot, and reached his room ten minutes before eight.

Dressing as quickly as he could he managed to reach the mess just as the others were going into dinner. As he passed Chatterton their eyes met, and Sidney knew he had been recognised.

After dinner, resisting the temptations of whisky or pool, Vere retired to a chair placed outside, and calling for a "B. and S." sat and smoked his cigar in silence and solitude. He flattered him-

self he was reviewing the events of the last few days in an impartial way, and making a dispassionate criticism of the whole affair. He thought Lucy a charming girl, who knew how to take care of herself, and that he himself knew how far an affair of this sort ought to go; in fact, that everything would go smoothly. He enjoyed his intrigue, and never thought of the girl and what her feelings might be.

The last of his brother officers' leaving the mess stumbled across him.

"Hello! Vere, still here!" he said, "thought you'd gone to bed long ago. Coming across?"

"Is it late?" asked Sidney.

"Past twelve," was the answer. "Come along."

"By Jove! I'd no idea. I must have been asleep," said Vere.

"Or in love," laughed the other.

The random shot hit the mark. As Vere turned into bed his last thoughts were of Lucy Stubbs, whom he had known precisely one hundred hours.

As for the girl, she had been met by all sorts of inquiries as to why she had returned so late: but seeing that her father was in an exceptionally good humour she satisfied them with the excuse that the fineness of the evening had caused her to walk farther than her usual constitutional.

For her the evening passed heavily by contrast with the happy afternoon; and when she went to bed it was to dream of a certain young gentleman with a fair moustache, whose lips had been pressed to hers but a short time before. She, too, was scorched without knowing it.

CHAPTER IV.

A MONTH passed, and a good part of a second, without Sidney Vere's making any great alteration in his mode of living.

The first meeting by appointment led to another, and that to a third, and so on until it became a matter of course that Lucy and Vere should meet at least every other day.

Chatterton just at this time was called away on private business, and Vere had the field to himself, secure from even the shadow of an interruption.

To say that these six weeks had been with any material effect on either of them would be to greatly underrate the influence which two people—young, impressionable, and good-looking—naturally exercise over each other.

Lucy had grown confidential, and told Sidney a great deal more about herself that she was aware of; and he, pleased by the confidence this pretty young creature reposed in him, encouraged her to tell all she cared to.

So Lucy had poured out her hopes and fears, her joys and woes, as freely as she might have done to a girl confidant of her own age, little thinking of intending to touch him as she did.

To a man who all his life had only had to wish for a thing to get it there was something almost annoying in finding that anyone else had wants or wishes unfulfilled, and when that somebody was a young girl of great beauty and sweetness of nature he could not avoid a chivalrous desire to do something to help her. So without knowing it the pair assumed new *rôles*, she the pretty maiden in distress, he the gallant knight come to her rescue.

It becomes dangerous for both when a young man and a pretty girl assume these relations to each other, and it is not surprising that, as Sidney Vere was sitting in his room one evening waiting for the first mess call, that his thoughts took rather a disagreeable turn.

The events of the past few weeks would keep crowding before him, and he could not help feeling that the path which he was treading must eventually lead him into doubtful ground, and that a time would come when his duty to himself and his relations must clash with the result of his past work.

"I wonder where this will end!" he thought. "I wish to goodness that I had never met her. She's a dear little woman, and we've seen a good deal more of each other than we ought to have; but what can it lead to? I might even keep it

up till the regiment marches, but even then I'm no better off. I've a good mind to stop it all, and go on leave just to break with her. If it has got to be done the sooner it's done the better. By Jove! it's time to dress for dinner."

When he reached the mess he found a letter waiting for him, which he read with some surprise. It was from the elder of his guardians, an uncle who was a Member of Parliament and well known man in town.

Although there was nothing in it to take exception to, and nothing really to surprise him, he could not help feeling annoyed and a good deal surprised that it should have appeared just at this juncture.

It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR SIDNEY,—

"It is so long since your poor aunt and I have heard from you that we think you must have quite forgotten us. I don't, of course, believe that you have, and I can assure you that though you neglect us we take the warmest interest in your well-being.

"Only a few days since we were having a talk about you which leads me to write and ask you to come up and have a talk with us.

"The fact is, my dear boy, we are agreed that it is high time you married, left the army, and settled down to the position to which you have been born.

"You and I both agreed that to go into the army was a very good start in life, and a capital way of passing the first three or four years after a young fellow's emancipation from school. But we neither of us intended you to make it a profession, which is what you will be doing if you stop much longer. I think you ought to retire at once, or as soon as you can suit yourself with a wife.

"I hear, too, incidentally, that Jones-Parry really means to ask for the Chiltern Hundreds at the end of the session, and you ought to stand for the county. I have no doubt of your being elected, as your father and grandfather were before you. Just think it over, and then come up here like a good boy and say what your views are. You need not send any excuses about leave, because I met your Colonel the other day, and he says he can manage that all right. Send a line to your aunt, to say when we are to expect you, and with our united love, believe me, your affectionate uncle,

"HERBERT VERE."

"P.S.—We met a Captain Chatterton of your regiment the other day at Stapleford. I did not see much of him, but your aunt was greatly taken with him."

It was not till Sidney read the letter through a second time that he noticed the postscript, which was over the last page.

When he did it made him knit his brows and come to the conclusion that Chatterton had told his uncle that he was getting entangled with Lucy Stubbs.

His first impulse was to write and refuse to come, and he did so, wording the letter strongly, in fact, almost rudely, in his refusal to be guided by his uncle's advice.

Luckily, he put the letter in his pocket to give to his servant to post, and found it on his dressing-table next morning. With that morning came a better frame of mind. Thinking over the letter more calmly, Sidney came to the conclusion that it was an accident, in which Chatterton had had no hand; and, moreover, he rather jumped at this way of getting out of his difficulties.

It would be easy to give Lucy an excuse about his urgent family business, and by the time he got back she would have forgotten all about him.

If he went away in a hurry she might be "cut up rough," he mentally added; but this way she had not the shadow of an excuse for doing so.

So he sat down and wrote to his aunt that he would come in three or four days' time, and then went and asked for leave, which he quite expected would be granted at once. Then he had nothing left to do but to sit and wait for it to be granted.

The day before he expected it to be granted

he rode down to the Brighton-road, and, as usual, found Lucy on the look-out for him—an everyday occurrence of late. Her first question was about his long absence.

"I have not seen you for nearly a week," she said; "where have you been?"

"I've been a good deal bothered lately," was his answer, for he meant to enlarge upon the urgent family business. "My guardian has been writing to me about some important matters, and they have worried me."

"I thought you were too big to have a guardian!" said Lucy; "only little boys have them."

"He is not my guardian now," said Sidney, "but he was for a long time. Besides, he is my uncle, and has always been my father too; my own died when I was a baby."

"Oh!" said Lucy, doubtfully.

"Yes, and I have to go to town to see him," continued Vere.

"Going away!" cried Lucy, in dismay.

"Only for a few days," said Sidney, touched by the tone of sorrow in which she spoke.

"Ah, I know what that means!" cried Lucy; "once away, you won't come back. Oh! I shall miss you so!"

And at the very thought of the deprivation her eyes filled with tears.

Vere was a man, and a very young one. His only notion of comforting was to put his arm round her waist and kiss her.

"Never mind, Lucy," he said, tenderly. "I shan't be away long, and when I come back you'll be all the more pleased to see me."

"You'll never come back," sobbed the girl; "I know you won't. You will forget all about me."

"I shan't really. I'll write to you, too, and I'll come back all right," said Vere, saying more than he meant under the influence of her tears. At the time perhaps he honestly intended to come.

"Promise!" she said.

"I promise," was his answer.

And so the storm cleared away. Only there was one point on which Lucy wished a clear understanding; there were to be no letters. She did not wish her father to know of her love affair. Then they changed the subject, and walked along as pleasantly as their wont was, until the setting sun warned them that it was time to return.

They said "good-bye" in the lane; only just as she was leaving him Lucy returned, and throwing both her arms round his neck kissed him.

She had never looked so lovely. For a second prudence flew to the winds, and Vere was on the point of saying something very rash, but he hesitated, and the instant after she was gone.

"By Jove! a narrow escape!" he said to himself, as he rode slowly homewards. "If she did that often I should be a gone man. Poor little woman, she's awfully cut up at my going. Anyhow, I'll see it does not occur again."

So the next day he travelled up to London, and in the course of a week or so he had forgotten all about Lucy. Not altogether, as a matter of fact, but he thought he had.

He determined to look out for a wife, and arranged to stand for the county in case Mr. Jones-Parry, who had been going to retire for the last ten years, really made up his mind to do so at last.

It was only of an evening at a dinner or a dance, when some young lady was particularly recommended to his notice by his aunt, that he could not help contrasting her with some one he had seen a great deal of lately; and, to his aunt's surprise, he took a great fancy to a most ineligible young lady, simply because of a fancied resemblance to Lucy Stubbs.

So his leave dragged on, and, to his relative's surprise and dismay, no one seemed to suit his fancy.

It was a year more than usually fruitful in its crop of new beauties, but none of them, nor of their predecessors of former years, seemed in any way to attract him.

The obvious favour which both the younger ladies and their mothers showed the handsome soldier with the fine estate did not seem to have

any effect on him, and he was no nearer falling in love than at the beginning of his leave.

In the meantime what had happened to Lucy Stubbs? Hers was a far harder task than Vere's.

He, at all events, had the hundred-and-one distractions offered to a young fellow in town; she had to face the ordinary dull round of her duty at home, without any amusement to draw her attention from her thoughts, and the deprivation of the one thing which had made her life so happy of late.

However, events were hurrying on, which soon gave her enough to think about.

CHAPTER V.

It was about a week or ten days after Sidney Vere's departure when Lucy Stubbs one evening, rather more than usually tired by her day's work, slipped out towards evening for her usual stroll across the downs.

She had been made unhappy all the day by her sick mother's querulousness, and by the constant annoyances of her younger brothers and sisters, and was glad to escape to her favourite haunts, now doubly loved on account of their association with Sidney Vere.

She was about half-way across the downs when she noticed a stranger walking slowly in such a direction that they were bound to meet. She did not take any more notice of him until they were close together, when, as she looked up to see how best to pass him, to her surprise the stranger raised his hat, and wished her "good evening" by name.

"I think you have made a mistake," said Lucy, rather frightened at being addressed thus unceremoniously.

"I cannot lay claim to the pleasure of your acquaintance," said the other, who was, in fact, Chatterton. "But I am a friend of Mr. Vere's, whom you know, I believe."

"Has he given you any message for me?" asked Lucy, betraying her eagerness by her heightened colour.

"Not exactly a message," said Chatterton, coolly. "But what I have to say concerns him entirely."

"What is it?" asked Lucy.

"Pardon me, but your question is rather abrupt. Suppose we walk on, and I have no doubt I shall be able to satisfy you."

They had been standing on the spot where they first met, but now Lucy bowed her assent, and they walked on together.

"Excuse me if I appear to cross-question you, Miss Stubbs," began Chatterton; "but how long have you known Sidney Vere?"

"A long time," answered Lucy; "that is, two months at least."

"And during that time you have seen a great deal of each other?"

Lucy looked at him. A suspicion was beginning to spring up in her mind that this was not quite regular, and that he was asking more than he had any right to do. She determined to enquire.

"I hardly understand you," she said.

"I mean you have met frequently?" asked Chatterton.

"Yes."

"And alone?" said the other, with an emphasis which caused his victim to pause in her walk, and brought the colour to her cheeks.

"You have no right to ask such questions," she cried. "I do not know who you are or what you mean, but I feel you do not want to do me any good turn."

Her companion smiled—a smile that made her feel more than ever uncomfortable. Then suddenly changing his half-careless manner for one of great energy, he exclaimed,—

"If that is your idea, Miss Stubbs, I will wish you good evening. I came here to-night as Sidney Vere's friend, as one who was willing to be your friend as well. The matter is in your own hands. If you wish me to go, and refuse to hear me, well and good. If, however, you are willing to discuss with me what I have to propose, better still."

"As you say, I have no right to cross-question you, no right to make your acquaintance in this irregular way, but I must plead my friendship for Mr. Vere as my excuse for my folly; and as for my boldness in addressing you, then I can only tell you that I expected better treatment at your hands."

He paused for answer. It was slow in coming. In spite of the allusion to Sidney Vere, and the fact that his claims to be heard were founded for friendship to the same, Lucy felt that this man was not her friend, and distrusted him accordingly. As often happens in such cases, she had two courses open to her, and ended by choosing the wrong one.

"I cannot send you away. Indeed, I do not wish to," she began, "if you are really honest in what you say. I did not like your questioning me, and was angry. I am sorry if I was wrong. I will hear all you have to say."

A quick look of triumph passed over her companion's face, and a new ring was in his voice as he spoke. It quickly steadied, however, and he proceeded.

"I am glad of your decision," he said, "and hope to prove I am right. And now, if you are willing to listen, I will go on."

Lucy nodded her assent.

"To spare you the further pain of cross-examination" he continued, "I will put the case plainly to you. I need not mention names; you will understand plainly enough what I mean."

Lucy again nodded, and Chatterton proceeded,—

"A certain young fellow of large fortune and old family, belonging to a distinguished cavalry regiment, happens to be in a dull country quarter. By accident he makes the acquaintance of a very charming young girl, who, in spite of great personal attractions, is neither his equal in birth nor position. You will forgive my putting the case plainly!" he added, breaking off in his tale of an imaginary couple. "Not content with distinguishing this rustic belle by dancing with her for a whole evening at a public assembly, he seeks an opportunity of renewing his acquaintance, succeeds in doing so, and the result is that their meetings alone are constant and regular!"

Again he paused to collect his thoughts.

"In such cases there can only be two results," he continued, presently; "and both of them are evil enough. I have only to deal with one of them. The pair fall in love with each other, and the lad being an honest lad offers marriage."

As he said this, Chatterton, hoping to throw Lucy off her guard, turned round and looked at her.

She met his eyes as fearlessly as he could have wished had he wished her not to be the promised wife of his dearest friend. Indeed, as he finished she spoke herself,—

"Go on with your story," she said, and her cool tone almost told the other what he wished to know so much, viz., whether Vere had made her an offer of marriage or not.

"The result is not hard to continue. The young man's friends hear of his scrape, they interfere. The boy is sent abroad, the girl is brought off, and there is an end of an unpleasant incident. What do you think of my story, Miss Stubbs?"

"I think it is possible, but not probable," she said, looking him full in the face. "If these two were really fond of each other all the relations in the world would not have parted them, and the girl in particular must have been a very unworthy specimen of her sex if she would barter her honest love for any sum of money which they might offer."

She spoke so firmly, so confidently, that Chatterton was nonplussed. He determined to take the bull by the horns.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing the future Mrs. Vere?" he asked.

He knew Sidney was too open in his dealings to have married without telling his friends.

"You ask a great deal too much," cried Lucy, now seriously angry. "Were it not that silence might lead you to suppose that Mr. Vere had asked me to be his wife I should refuse to answer, but as it is, and as you seem determined to take the worst view of everything, I will tell you that

he has not, nor, so far as I know, is he likely to do so."

Chatterton was astonished at her coolness. He at once fell into the mistake of supposing that as she did not storm she did not care. Greatly relieved he proceeded at once.

"I am glad to hear it, Miss Stubbs," he said. "I may tell you I am here on behalf of his relations, who have heard accidentally that he was becoming entangled in a discreditable intrigue. It will be a great pleasure to me to be able to contradict the story, and, above all to say that the lady whose acquaintance he has made is far too sensible to allow him to make a fool of himself. I need not tell you that the Vere are a leading family in —shire. Sidney is now head of the family, and his people propose to make him stand for the county. Above all, they are anxious that he should marry suitably and settle down. We were afraid he was going to make an ass of himself. It would not have been a happy marriage for either of you. He would have married a charming wife, of course, but you could hardly have taken the part. Your shortcomings would have made him ashamed of you, and then dislike would have followed. It is best as it is."

"It is," said Lucy, in a hard voice.

"I have nothing more to say or do," said Chatterton, as they just reached the end of the lane. "Oh! yes, by-the-bye. Your conduct in this matter will make Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Vere your friends for life. I am commissioned to say that if their interest is of any use to you, if you wished to be a governess or anything of that sort, that they will be delighted to help you."

"Thanks," said Lucy, in the same constrained manner as before, "but I have no need of their assistance."

"Then I will wish you good evening," said Chatterton, and half held out his hand.

Lucy took no notice of his action. She gave him a very distant bow.

Then as she watched him disappear round the corner of the lane her suppressed emotion found vent in a little cry so full of agony that it might have touched the heart of even John Chatterton had he heard it, and she sank fainting to the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a rude awakening for her when she came to herself after her swoon. John Chatterton had done his work, and done it well, according to his own plans. The poor girl had never realised before how thoroughly she had allowed herself to be taken by the handsome young soldier, and it was only now, when love was forbidden, that she discovered that what she had taken for friendship was in fact love.

To know one loves when love is impossible is bad enough in itself, but to be told that you wish to taste the forbidden fruit and must not in so peculiarly harsh a way is worse still. The main impression left in her mind was that she might never again enjoy those happy walks and talks which had been the happiest period of her short life.

Luckily for herself she was a girl of some strength of character, and not inclined to give way to vain regrets. Setting before herself what she knew to be her duty, she determined that from that time forward she would neither, by word or deed, betray her own secret nor encourage Sidney Vere, should he attempt to resume those habits of close intimacy into which they had fallen previous to his departure on leave.

It was the old story, the moral of which is that he who loves and runs away loves to love another day.

Sidney Vere had chosen to flutter round this girl, and having done his best to destroy her happiness had run away and left her to conquer her disappointment as best she might. Not that he meant it. Men seldom do. It is not their nature to be cruel—they only get into the way of seeing too much of some young woman they never intend to marry, and then suddenly break off the connection, and unharmed themselves,

fancy that the weaker sex, too, escape unhurt. Sometimes it is so—oftener not.

It was a weary time for her, after her conversation with John Chatterton, and the rude stammering of her dreams of love. Never before had the round of household duty seemed so wearisome, or the petty annoyances of her daily life so tedious. Gradually, however, the mere force of habit dulled the pain, and, save that she was not so careless and bright as of old, there was little change. The outer world noticed nothing, and there was no one in her house either to notice anything wrong.

Sidney Vere returned to his regiment fully determined to have nothing more to say to Lucy. He had been strongly advised to have nothing to do with her by his uncle, who had heard all about his entanglement from Chatterton, and the counsel had sunk deeper than he thought, and Sidney stopped, as it were, on the very brink of an abyss, had shuddered and turned back. He fully realised now how thoroughly unfitted the girl was to take her place in society as his wife, and saw that fifty pretty faces would not atone for one plebeian.

His general feeling was one of disgust with the sex in general for having disturbed his peace of mind and let him into complications with his best friends, which he had never before experienced.

So he made his way back to Swimmerleigh, fully intending to have no more to say to any of them. At first he kept his promise to himself well enough. He avoided female society and took to outdoor sports with an energy which surprised everybody, spending whole days playing cricket with the local club, and never grumbling when asked to go long distances to play in uninteresting matches.

As long as this fit of zeal lasted well and good; he got on famously, and thought no more of his love affairs. He even got so far as to write and decline the invitation of the St. John Hares—friends of his uncle—to stay with them, urging, as an excuse, that he had been disappointed in his leave. He had to take the last leave to do it, but that did not matter much.

Presently, however, cricket came to an end, and the little sport there was in the immediate neighbourhood was soon exhausted; and then before hunting came a period of enforced idleness, highly dangerous to any body in his state.

So it chanced that little by little he got tired of perpetual walks and rides, and began gradually to recall the existence of such a person as Lucy Stubbs, and to think how pleasant those rambles which he had had with her had been the year before. And so time having blunted his good resolution, he gradually began to wander in the direction of the Brighton-road.

The first time he passed the once familiar gate he felt something like a pang of remorse at his desertion of the pretty child who had trusted him so thoroughly.

The house looked cold and bleak that early October evening, and at first he thought it deserved, but the shrill tones of a scolding woman's voice pierced the quiet air, and he almost thought that he could hear the sweet voice, which he had once so liked to hear, answering. Whether it was fancy or not it gave vent to a flood of recollections, which, as he rode home, grew stronger and stronger.

The old story of poor Lucy's sorrows in her unhappy home was now fully remembered, and for the first time it occurred to him that he might have behaved harshly in acting as he had done.

That night at dinner he was moody and out of temper. His brother officers rallied him about his lack of spirits, but he answered so savagely that they saw it was best to let him alone.

Immediately after dinner he left the mess, and in his own room—having lit a pipe, and mixed a brandy and soda—gave full play to the thoughts which were oppressing him. The scene of his last parting from Lucy came back in all its reality, and with it came the recollection of the promise which he had so ruthlessly broken—the mere thought of which now half-maddened him.

In his first flush of anger after his uncle's

warning he had boldly determined that he would have no more to say to her, and had stifled the pleadings of conscience.

Had he been wise enough to go to her on his return, and say that he did not care for her, and it was better that they should part, it would have been all right; but now that was impossible, and he appeared in her eyes as a man who had wilfully broken his word.

He looked at his watch with every intention of going off straight to ask her forgiveness. It was past twelve o'clock, he must wait till next day.

Even that seemed an age; and then, how about meeting her? She might be ill, or she might not come. Had he better write, and make an appointment?

Worn out at last by his conflicting emotions he turned into bed, and fell into a sound sleep, from which he was only awakened by his servant. As he dressed he debated whether he would write or not to Lucy to ask her to meet him that afternoon in the old place. On the whole he determined to trust to luck.

Never had a morning's duty seemed so long as on that day. The parade was insufferable; the colonel's temper was worse than usual; his horses and men were turned out like he did not know what—in fact, everything was wrong.

Of course, in reality, it was only himself; but that he did not take into consideration. At last one o'clock came, and he returned to his room, and, throwing down his sword with an oath, declared that another such day would drive him out of the service.

Lucheon over he ordered his horse, and rode off to the Brighton-road. There was nobody in the little garden, and when he reached the Downs beyond he could not find Lucy. He waited for a full hour, and then returned to barracks in a worse temper than before.

Thus several days passed, and nothing happened. Day after day he rode out to the Downs, and day after day found nobody.

The fact was Lucy had seen him, and, determining to avoid him, purposely went another way. Of this, however, he, of course, knew nothing, and was only disgusted at his own want of success.

He was to have no better luck, however; and when, after many days of fruitless search, he wrote to her to ask her to make an appointment, as he had something of importance to communicate, the letter was returned opened in another envelope.

CHAPTER VII.

To be disappointed in a matter like this was the reverse of pleasant to a man of Vere's nature.

At first he fumed and fretted, then he tried to treat the whole affair with contempt, and, finally, he forgot all about it.

He managed to spend the first half of the leave season in tolerable comfort, and was not sorry when his own turn came to get away. His first visit was to his own estate, but he found a month of that, even with the assistance of a few genial bachelor friends, was quite enough, and by the beginning of February he had made up his mind to go up to town, and join his uncle and aunt.

There was one other visitor staying in the house, viz., Edith Hare, whose people were to come up to London rather later than usual that year, and who had accepted an invitation to stay with the Vere very readily indeed.

At first Sidney was annoyed at finding her there, but after a little he became reconciled to her presence, and after a good deal of persuasion on his aunt's part fancied he was in love with her, and actually proposed, and was accepted.

He was to leave the army and enter on his proper career as soon as he could get his papers; and as even courtship takes a certain amount of time, his leave was nearly over when he found himself an engaged man.

Meanwhile in another quarter things had been going in a way which, had he known it, would have exercised a very considerable effect on his feelings and actions.

Directly he left, John Chatterton, who had been on leave during the early part of the winter, and came back with the new year, set to work to carry out a scheme which he had long had in view, and which explained the interest he took in the doings of Lucy Stubbs and Sidney.

Like the latter he had been greatly struck by the girl's grace and beauty on the night of the mayor's ball, and he had at once determined to strike up an acquaintance with her.

In this he was forestalled by his younger rival, and hence the carefully-laid plans by which he had succeeded in parting the pair. At first he had chafed under his inability to bring about a rupture, but after his chance meeting with the elder Vere's everything had been plain sailing.

In a short time he had the satisfaction of seeing his rival out of the field, and himself free to act as he pleased.

Even then his difficulties were considerable, and he had to face many disappointments in his attempts to make Lucy's acquaintance, or, rather, to renew the acquaintance which he had forced on her by his free use of Sidney's name.

All that autumn he had watched both her and Sidney with the most zealous care, to make sure there was no attempt at communication between them, and had seen with alarm Lucy's evident intention of renewing his intimacy with Lucy. Fortune again favoured him.

It was not till his return from leave that chance threw the opportunity he wished for in his way.

After Sidney's departure, which was duly notified in the local paper, Lucy became freer in her movements, and again began to take her evening walks across the downs.

Here one day Chatterton found her. He was very good-looking, thirty years of age, and when he wished, could be exceedingly fascinating with the other sex.

At first Lucy had refused to have anything to say to him, but little by little she overcame this, and before very long they were almost intimate.

It did not take Chatterton long to discover that she was unhappy at home, and he so well and so quickly improved upon his knowledge of this fact that he made her, unknown to herself, think these afternoon walks the only happy time of her weary day.

Gradually the last vestige of her reserve vanished, and she began to feel almost the same confidence in him which she had once put in Sidney Vere.

So the days and weeks glided by, and though very little more than commonplaces had passed between them, Chatterton felt rather than knew that he was on a sufficiently strong footing with her to defy his former rival.

That, by the way, was a subject they seemed to have mutually agreed to avoid, and the very name of the absentee was never mentioned between them.

It was early in March when the announcement of Vere's engagement reached his regiment.

Chatterton pricked up his ears as he heard the paragraph read out of a letter to the Colonel, and began to wonder how he could best suit his own plans to the news which he had just heard.

After some hesitation he came to the conclusion that he would tell Lucy that Vere was engaged, and once for all beyond her reach.

He never felt really sure, although he told himself that he did, that the reappearance of his rival might oust him.

So that afternoon, when he reached the downs, he, as usual, found Lucy there.

After a few ordinary remarks he delivered himself of his news.

"We got some news about an old friend of yours to-day, Miss Stubbs," he said.

"Who do you mean?" asked Lucy, quickly, the colour rising to her face.

"Sidney Vere is going to be married," said Chatterton, pretending not to notice her confusion.

"Sidney Vere going to be married!" she repeated, mechanically, as if rather stunned by the suddenness of the blow.

"Yes; to a Miss Hare," pursued the other, wishing to give her time to recover herself. "A

good match for her, too. I hear she has nothing but her face to recommend her, and that the settlements will all be on his side."

"Is she not a lady?" asked Lucy.

"Oh, yes; she is that!" was the answer, with a shrug of his shoulders. "She is just one of the class I most avoid—your very poor and very proud people, with a good name and position, and nothing on which to keep it up. I suppose however, it does not matter, as Vere has lots for both."

"So he is going to be married," said Lucy, half to herself. "Perhaps it is all for the best!"

"Very much for the best. He wants a wife to keep him in order, and now he has got one."

"I wonder if he cares for her very much?" said Lucy.

"Of course he does, or he would not want to marry her." Then suddenly jealousy got the better of him, and he asked, fiercely, "You don't mean to say that you still care for him, do you?"

"I don't know what you mean by caring for him, but I still like him. I always shall. He was so good and kind—so different from other people."

"Well, you had better put him out of your head now, at all events," said Chatterton, coarsely.

"I put him out of my head a long time ago, Captain Chatterton, even if he was ever in it," answered Lucy. "I should have thought that our first conversation would have made that remark unnecessary."

Chatterton saw she was offended, and coarse and rough as his nature was, he had one soft spot, and somehow Lucy had managed to touch it. Dropping his rough manner at once, and taking her hand, he began in a very different strain.

"Lucy," he said, almost pleadingly, "take the advice of a friend, of something more than a friend, and really put this man away from you. I don't know in what relation he stood to you, but I am sure now that he has treated you badly, and I bitterly regret my share in his desertion, small as it was."

"Who said that he had treated me badly?" cried Lucy, indignantly.

"Never mind him now, Lucy, but listen to me. He can do no more for you—I can. Are you willing to share your life with me, to escape at once from the troubles at home which you have so often told me about, and in some brighter spot lead for ever a happier, better life?"

Lucy did not quite know what he meant, but thought she understood him to be asking her to marry him. Such a thought had never entered her head, and for a moment she paused ere she answered,—

"Do you mean to ask me to marry you?" she asked.

He hesitated, stammered, and said nothing. Lucy understood him.

"Captain Chatterton," she cried, "at least I thought you were sufficiently a gentleman not to insult a defenceless girl. Now I know you to be a wicked man, and I will never speak to you again."

"Very pretty, indeed!" said Chatterton, with a sneer. "Is this the way you treated Sidney Vere? Now I understand why he broke with you so suddenly."

"Sidney Vere was good and honest, which you can never be," she answered, indignantly. "Had he been here you would never have dared to say what you have."

In their excitement they had approached a small wood—possibly, too, their voices were somewhat raised.

Both started back as some one stepped out of the wood, and lifting his hat to Lucy, said quite coolly,—

"I heard some one asking for Sidney Vere? Here I am. What is it, Lucy? You look as if you had been crying."

In an instant Lucy forgot his coarseness, his neglect, his desertion. She flew towards him, and nestling (as she had done once before almost at the same spot) in his arms, looked up in his

face and sobbed. "Sidney, save me from that wicked man!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It would be difficult to say which of the three were most embarrassed. John Chatterton was furious with himself for having shown his hand so coarsely as to entirely destroy his chances of bringing his pet scheme to a favourable conclusion. Lucy hardly dared look up after having, as she feared, betrayed her secret love for Sidney Vere, who, in his turn, was holding in his arms, and, to all intents and purposes, warmly caressing a beautiful young woman as if entirely oblivious of the fact that he was engaged to be married to somebody else, and that at no very distant period.

The embarrassment was shown by the silence which followed Lucy's appeal for aid. Chatterton turned away, and tried to smile the smile of unconcern with poor success. Vere whispered a word or two of comfort to Lucy, and then, turning to the other, threw down the gauntlet.

"Chatterton," he began, "perhaps you will explain what all this means!"

"I fail to see that there is anything to explain," said the other. "Just as much as I fail to see why you should constitute yourself for the nonce a knight-errant."

The sneer in the last sentence roused Sidney's anger. Restraining himself with difficulty, however, he answered, speaking slowly, and weighing his words,—

"You may try to put me off if you like," he said, "but I venture to say that there is a good deal to explain. I am walking towards the down when I am attracted by the sound of voices raised as if in dispute. I walk towards them, and find Miss Stubbs and yourself engaged in hot dispute; Miss Stubbs in tears, and on my appearance she throws herself into my arms and claims my protection in terms which are, to say the least of it, remarkable, and yet you have nothing to explain!"

"I decline to discuss the matter with you," said Chatterton, sullenly.

"Very well; Lucy, will you tell me?" asked Vere.

Poor Lucy blushed up to her eyes, and then answered firmly,—

"Captain Chatterton was pleased to treat me as if—"

"Chatterton, do you mean to say you dared to hint such a thing?" exclaimed Vere.

"My dear Vere, it is exactly like yourself to jump at conclusions, and accept such very slender evidence as that offered."

"Your manner convinces me that what I suspect is true. All I can say is that your conduct is not that of a gentleman, and your sentiments such as no gentleman would endorse."

It was Chatterton's turn to be angry, but he, too, restrained himself, and merely murmured, "Very pretty."

"And," continued Vere, not heeding the remark, "I can only say that from henceforth I decline to number you among my friends. A man who can take a mean advantage of an innocent and defenceless girl is not fit to belong to the society of gentlemen, and I shall take every opportunity of avoiding you, and if you like, say why I do so."

"Vere, you are a fool!" said Chatterton. "In the course of conversation I let fall some remarks of rather a warmer nature than perhaps I ought to have, which Miss Stubbs was pleased to take as an offer of marriage, and while I was trying to hint that she had mistaken my meaning she jumped from that to a wrong conclusion. I assure you it was nothing more."

One look at Lucy's indignant eyes was sufficient to convince Vere that this was hardly a true version of the matter. He was very nearly saying so, but Chatterton had determined to carry the war into the enemy's country and began at once.

"And for yourself, while we are talking about men of honour, how comes it that while, on the one hand, we all know you to be engaged, I find you on such exceedingly intimate terms with this young—hem!—person. That also requires explanation."

It was Sidney now who looked uncomfortable. It was not his protestation of Lucy which troubled him, but the mention of Edith Vere. It was only a fortnight since his engagement, and he was already weary of her. Several times he had debated the advisability of writing to break off the engagement, and as often had decided not to do so.

As has already been shown, the match was rather of his aunt's choosing than his own, and already he would give half his income to be free again. He felt the mention of his fiancée's name like a stab or an unpleasant reminder of a debt which is pressing, and which it is not convenient to pay.

"You know as well as I do that our meeting was accidental," he said, "and that Miss Stubbs' action was the result of something which you had said or done."

"True, for the time being," said Chatterton. "But I doubt if Miss Vere or her friends would quite approve of the obvious intimacy which exists at present. I should be more careful if I were you."

"In what, pray?"

"Why, I should take care to be off with the old love before I was on with the new."

"Miss Stubbs will hardly recognise herself under that title," said Vere, incisively.

"I thought as much, but I wished to word my remarks as politely as possible," sneered the other.

"Chatterton, you are a scoundrel. You know as well as I do that what you say is false."

"My dear Vere, you have no gratitude."

"Gratitude. What for?" asked Sidney. "For being insulted in fifty ways!"

"No. You are as deaf as an owl. I was doing you a good turn when up on you come, interfere in your most hectoring manner, and generally upset the coach."

"My so-called interference," said Sidney, "came none too soon. You cannot pretend that Miss Stubbs' manner ought not to have convinced you of your mistake."

"Maiden coyne, my dear fellow," answered Chatterton, "which I venture to say would have soon vanished but for your unlucky interference."

"Chatterton, I repeat that you are a scoundrel," cried Vere. "You know Lucy to be as good and pure a girl as there is in all England, yet you persist in putting her in a most odious light."

"It is you who have put her in an odious light," retorted the other. "It was your conduct which first of all led me to act as I did."

Sidney Vere hung his head; in truth, his sins were finding him out. Engaged to one woman he did not love, accused, and justly, too, of trifling with and damaging the reputation of another, he was like an ass between two burdens. Like all men of quick impulses, he at once decided how his duty lay. It was for a moment, the struggle between Edith Vere, the representative of his own class, and Lucy Stubbs, the daughter of the people. The first, besides being absent, was disliked. She had no chance, and Lucy's claims carried the day.

He turned to where she stood with her hands clasped and her eyes cast down, the unwilling witness of this quarrel between her rival suitors, and, taking her hand, spoke in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Lucy," he said, "if you can forgive my neglect and the injury I have done you, let me make you the only reparation worthy of my fault. Will you marry me, and let me try by my future conduct to make up for what has happened? In this way, at least, we can show your traducer that what he thinks has no confirmation in fact. Will you be my wife?"

There was a moment's pause, a moment which, to all of them, seemed like a lifetime, as Lucy was considering her answer. For a short space love and inclination struggled against what she thought to be her duty, but then the sense of right—powerful to carry her through all difficulties—won the day, and she answered,—

"Thank you, Sidney. Captain Chatterton," turning to him, "you were base enough to make me an offer just now which you ought to have been ashamed of, and when upbraided by my friend here, you made your conduct worse by

charging me with things you knew to be false. Your conduct will bring its own reward in the future, and Heaven grant that no wretched woman may ever be persuaded to become your wife.

"For you, Mr. Vere, you hardly know what you are saying just now, and are carried away by excitement. Thank you all the same. When you marry Miss Hare," a slight falter shook her voice, but it recovered immediately, "I hope you may be as happy as you deserve, but I cannot let you either go without a word of warning. If ever you are blessed with sons, teach them to think twice ere they trifle with any woman's peace, and they will save much trouble to others and to themselves. From this time we are strangers. In future I shall look for friends among those of my own rank in life, for my experience of others has not been so pleasant as to make me ever wish to try again. Good-bye!"

The last words were addressed to Sidney, and she held out her hand. He would have spoken, but she waved her hand to stop him, and, without taking any notice of Chatterton, she walked away.

Both men stood there as if rooted to the ground, doubtless torn by conflicting emotions, and forgetting their quarrel of a few minutes before. But of the various feelings they experienced, by far this one was uppermost, namely, the feeling of a man who has engaged in a battle, confident of success, and then has got decidedly the worst of it. But Sidney did marry Miss Hare, and Chatterton died a bachelor.

[THE END.]

WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?

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CHAPTER I.

It was a glorious day in June. The sun shone bright and warm on the green fields and winding, dusty country roads, over long stretches of waving corn and clover-meadows lying beyond. The sun ripened the apples and peaches in orchards, and the great red roses, tossing purple lilac, and wisteria blooms in the old-fashioned gardens. But the most beautiful object on which its golden rays fell was a young girl leaning on a wicket-gate, anxiously watching the winding road that led over the hills to the village beyond.

She was the prettiest girl in Woodhaven. The slim, graceful figure in the pink lawn dress was perfect, from the tip of the dainty toe to the crown of the dark, curly head, which she carried so proudly.

She was a gay, bright, saucy young creature, with olive skin, a sparkling face of wondrous witchery, dimpled cheeks, and lips outviving the vivid crimson deep down in the hearts of the great red passion-flowers; small, white, pearly teeth, and black, velvety eyes, proud, sweet, yet half defiant in their glances; a girl who, by right of her glorious beauty, would, from among a thousand others, rivet the eyes of a stranger at once.

Beatrice Daly should have reigned queen of the great world of fashion, instead of being only the belle of Woodhaven.

She had scores of admirers, but few were brave enough to face the dragon of an aunt who stood grim sentinel over her, to ask if they might be permitted to pay their addresses to the beautiful young niece, after one of their number, Donald Lindsay, who had gone to Beech Cottage on just such an errand, had been so summarily ejected.

Donald was fair, handsome, a college graduate, and very gentlemanly. His father ran the only newspaper of which the village boasted; but somehow the paper did not flourish. The editor took in more poultry, butter and eggs from the farmers in exchange for his newsy little sheet than he did money.

The son, Donald, was a poet of no mean order. His verses appeared regularly, but they were only read by the few young girls of the village.

The farmers said he was a likely young fellow enough, and might amount to something in the future if he turned his white hands to the plough and his brain to crops, instead of jingling verses.

Donald had spent all of his boyhood and youth at college, the means being provided by a wealthy and eccentric old gentleman who had taken quite a fancy to the boy.

The first thing handsome Donald did when he returned to his native village to take his place in his father's office was to fall desperately in love with the beautiful Beatrice Daly. He commenced his wooing with passionate earnestness, but he made the mistake of his life by being straightforward and manly enough to first ask the aunt if he might call on Beatrice with the hope of some day winning the gloriously beautiful girl for his wife. The visit of the handsome young stranger and his audacious request amazed her, though she had known his family for years.

"Certainly not," she replied, with asperity. The answer nearly took his breath away for an instant, but he did not lose his head.

"I know you might select many a wealthier suitor," he said, "but I hope to win wealth in time. I would start in with love and ambition—"

Miss Daly cut him short with a contemptuous sneer.

"Love and ambition!" she echoed. "A man should have much more than that nowadays before he asks a young girl to tie herself to him and face a hard, up-hill future."

"If every man waited until he had a competency there would be fewer early marriages," declared the young lover. "Surely you recognise that fact, Miss Daly?"

"Have you spoken on this subject to my—my niece?" she asked, sharply, after she had listened to their simple love story from beginning to end, the angry light in her eyes deepening.

"Not one word as yet," said Donald, hesitatingly.

"Then I forbid you to do so," she replied, sharply.

"But, my dear Miss Daly, think how I love Beatrice!" he pleaded, valiantly. "Surely you would not wreck the lives of two young people who love each other dearly!"

"Love each other!" cried Miss Daly, with unutterable scorn. "What is love but folly—a sentiment which lasts but a day, leaving people sadder and wiser! All the mistakes in the world are made by foolish people who are in love. I have no patience to listen to another word."

"Then you refuse to entertain the idea of my winning Beatrice for my wife!" he asked, rising, his hat in his hand.

"Most emphatically," she replied, grimly. "Consider the matter settled at once and for all. I absolutely refuse my consent."

Donald Lindsay looked at the stern, hard-set lips, which, he was sure, no man had ever had the temerity to kiss, even when their owner was young, and threw back his fair, handsome, boyish head and snuffed.

"Then, my dear Miss Daly, I tell you frankly that I shall do everything in my power to win Beatrice without your consent. You have heard of the old adage: 'All is fair in love and war,' I presume. I cannot give your niece up."

"We shall see," was the curt reply; and he wondered at the strange look that crossed her face, leaving it fairly purple in spots.

Miss Daly arose, and with a stern mien rang the bell.

"Go!" she said, pointing to the door, "and never darken the door of Beech Cottage while I live: never attempt to see Beatrice again. If you do I shall resort to harsh measures!"

By this time the handsome young lover had learned that it was the most unwise thing that he could possibly have done—confess his plans to his enemy; he should have kept them to himself.

With a low bow he left the angry lady; but he had made up his mind to ask Beatrice to marry him at the first opportunity. He would obtain a special license so that if she consented he would do all in his power to urge her to marry him without an hour's delay. Then let Miss Daly rave as she might, she could not part them.

From behind the closed blinds Miss Daly

watched him depart. Donald Lindsay would have been struck with amazement could he have looked back into the room which he had just left and beheld its occupant. Miss Daly was pacing up and down the stuffy little parlour, trembling like a leaf.

"How strange that such a possibility as this never occurred to me before," she muttered. "Great Heaven! it would never do. Beatrice must not love—must not marry. I know why—yes, yes, I alone know why."

Her soliloquy was suddenly cut short by the entrance of the young girl herself.

"You ought to have been with me out in the garden a few minutes ago, Aunt Miranda," she cried, with a merry, rollicking laugh. "I have had such fun."

Miss Daly started. She knew well that Donald Lindsay had not gone into the garden, for she had watched him out of sight going over the road that led to the village. Before she had time to answer the girl went on,—

"While I was standing by the sun-dial the strangest, most uncouth little old man that I ever beheld stopped at the gate and called to me for a glass of cold water from the well near by.

"You can come in and help yourself, if you choose," I answered. "I do not wait upon beggars."

"He hobbled in, and all the time he was drinking the water he was eyeing me curiously."

"A very proud young lady," he said; "but too much pride is ruinous. I have no money to pay for the water," he said, after a moment's pause, "though it was worth a king's ransom to me; but, if you like, I will tell your fortune. Perhaps you would like to hear what a strange fate there is in store for you. I am an astrologist as well. I am on my way to the county fair."

"Surely you were not so foolish as to let him attempt it!" cried Miss Daly, white as death, springing forward and grasping the girl's rounded, dimpled arm.

"Why not?" laughed Beatrice, with a toss of her pretty curls. "Like all of Mother Eve's daughters I was born with a streak of curiosity, and, of course, I wanted to hear all about the future."

"Well," said Miss Daly, the terrible pallor still overspreading her face, and a look of intense fear in her shifting grey eyes, "what did he tell you? A pack of miserable falsehoods, of course."

Again the girl laughed a merry, rollicking laugh.

"First, he insisted upon reading the future from the palm of my hand; but something he saw there, or said he did, held him spell-bound.

"Your life will be no ordinary one, my proud young lady," he said. "A great change is soon to come into your life."

"Am I to have a handsome lover, like other girls of my age?" I demanded.

"There are two lovers, and it will be hard to choose between them," he answered. "Ah, young lady," he cried in an awful whisper, "I—I will not tell you what else I see here. There are some things it is better not to know—a thousand times better. It is all coming to you soon—very, very soon."

"How soon?" I cried. "Do tell me."

"Before your eighteenth birthday," he answered.

"Then whatever is to happen must happen quickly," I said; "for I shall be eighteen next week. But tell me what is to happen."

"He shook his shaggy head, muttered something which I could not catch, and dropped my hand."

"It is best for you not to know. In the time to come, when you look back at this hour, you will be thankful that I did not tell you."

"With that he was gone. I must hurry back to the well and rinse out the glass he used."

It was well that Beatrice did not look back as she danced merrily out of the room, and that she went quickly.

The door had scarcely closed upon her retreating form ere Miss Daly threw up her hands and fell fainting to the floor. She recovered consciousness before anyone discovered what had happened; then she went quietly up to her own

room and carefully locked the door. Shortly afterward there was an odour of something burning.

"Miss Daly is making a fire in her grate, and this a hot afternoon in June," thought the little housemaid. "Dear me, how eccentric she is. I wonder if I shall ever be an old maid, and if I was so unfortunate as to be one if I should become as cross and cranky as she is! Heaven forbid! It's a wonder that pretty, lively Miss Beatrice can endure it here. She is not allowed to have a single girl companion, and no lovers. I often wonder what Miss Daly is thinking of when she looks at the girl with a certain peculiar look in her eyes. Does she love Miss Beatrice or does she hate her?"

CHAPTER II.

ALTHOUGH Miss Daly had lived for nearly eighteen years in Woodhaven still very little was known of her by the simple country folk, for she went among them but rarely, and then only when it was absolutely necessary.

Years before she had suddenly appeared in the little hamlet accompanied by an infant but a few weeks old. She had bought Beech Grove Cottage, its isolation on the lonely road, fully a mile from the village, being its greatest recommendation.

She refused every advance of her neighbours toward intimacy; would not answer the door-bell even when the minister called, and never crossed the portal of the old ivy-covered church.

After fruitless attempts to be friendly the villagers at last left her alone in peace. But they often wondered about the little child, and asked one another how she was faring in the keeping of this dark, taciturn, mysterious woman, who announced herself to be the little one's aunt.

Years rolled on, and the little child, who came occasionally to the village with Miss Daly was observed to be growing into an unusually lovely girl. She did not go to school with the village children; Miss Daly taught her at home, devoting her whole life to this one object.

The hard-working village folk had found out but one thing regarding Miss Daly's business, and that was that she regularly received remittances twice a year.

The years glided on almost imperceptibly, and almost before Miss Daly could realise what had occurred, she found herself with a tall slip of a young girl on her hands—a girl as gloriously beautiful as a dream, and as bright and joyous, despite her gloomy surroundings, as a veritable sunbeam.

The young men of the village were the first to make this discovery, and fairly haunted the road that led past the cottage.

Some, more brave than the rest, made it a point to stop at the cottage on one excuse or another, always choosing the time when Miss Daly was seen jogging her old grey mare toward the town.

Thus it was that, entirely without her aunt suspecting it, Beatrice Daly came to know most of the young people for miles around.

Miss Miranda Daly, the stern old aunt, although more than sensible in most things, had made a fatal error in one thing—she had fostered in the girl ideas altogether too lofty for her station in life.

She had a strange mania for talking to the girl of grand castles and great wealth and grandeur, until, hearing of it so constantly, the girl grew to long for the companionship of titled ladies, lords, dukes, and belted earls.

It was but a few weeks before our story opened that Beatrice had met Donald Lindsay, and in a very romantic fashion, too.

Feeling lonely in her aunt's absence one afternoon she had gone down to the thickly wooded grove just at the back of the orchard to search for a nightingale's nest, which she felt certain must be in one of the wide-spreading beech-trees which she could so plainly see from her own little bedroom window, for the bird always flew toward a particular bough.

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A PLAIN GIRL.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

As for affairs in India, all this time, there had been no severe fighting yet; for the moment grim-visaged war had smoothed his wrinkled front, and we fancied that we could catch faint, desultory notes, as from the pipes of piping peace, we were only too eager to believe in the truth of those charming sounds—laid a ready ear to a consummation so much to be desired.

There was a general resting on their oars as far as the force in Afghanistan was concerned. I had no need at present to be very anxious about George, and my mind was more at liberty to be very angry with him, and I was.

As time went on he did not condescend to take the slightest notice of "George Philip" by letter or message, even although in a sudden foolish burst of maternal pride I had had his photo taken—when he had reached the ripe age of four months—and despatched a copy to India.

After it was gone I was very sorry I had sent it, but my regrets were too late and of no use. Who ever gets anything back from the post-office?

I went over to Park-lane constantly, was left there by my mother-in-law, and sent home in state in grandmamma's brougham. The distance was very trifling, and I could easily have walked, but neither of the old ladies would listen to the suggestion—Mrs. Karslake, because she was on her honour not to trust me out of her sight alone—grandmamma, because she considered me too young and pretty to walk about unattended.

She seemed to think a great deal of my visits now, and I really spent as much time with her as I could possibly spare.

I read to her, told her all the little bits of chit-chat I could think of, collected from Miranda's lips at sundry meal-times. I set up her knitting, picked up dropped stitches, wrote her notes, did all her small commissions, brought her flowers, periodicals, new photos, and was as useful to her as I knew how to be. One thing alone she never could prevail on me to do—only one thing, and that was to open the piano, and sit down to it and sing.

"And you have such a good voice, child, and I'm so fond of music—singing especially; and, really, after the small fortune I spent upon your masters at Madame Duverne's you surely have not given it up?" very irritably.

"No, I used to sing a great deal at Sandgate. I was quite the regimental *prima donna*; but I have never sung, much less opened a piano, since last September."

"That's all sentimental rubbish," snapped the old lady, with a spic of her ancient fire. "Just go over to the piano at once—I insist—and if you can't sing and won't sing, at least play. Play something soft and slow—it soothes me."

I obeyed, and placed my unpractised fingers on the keys, and gradually things came back to me. I played one or two of Schumann's shorter pieces—vague, melancholy, weird melodies—one or two of Mendelssohn's songs without words; played till "The brougham for Mrs. Karslake" interrupted me, and for the future half-an-hour at the piano was always a portion of my duties at grandmamma's.

It was August before we left town; Miranda wished to see the season out to the bitter end, and many and many a weary night did she keep her unlucky old mother out of bed till it was daylight, convoying her from one crowded party to another.

I was well out of it all. When they were preparing to sail forth I was preparing to retire for the night; and when Miranda appeared at luncheon next day she generally looked as cross as two sticks, and as yellow as a lemon, and made nothing but uncomplimentary remarks about the preceding evening's entertainment.

It was often on the tip of my tongue to say "Then why do you go?" but fortunately I refrained. Miranda had a temper like her brother, and in a serious war of words I would be nowhere.

She was handsome, in a cold, hard, dark style,

and I should have as soon have thought of marrying a fly-blister if I were a man.

I was extremely glad to get away from hot, glaring, stifling London to the nice shady, green country; but grandmamma was in a dreadful state of mind at my departure. She made me solemnly promise to return from time to time and see her, and this I promised to do if Mrs. Karslake had no objection.

She ruled me as George's deputy; but I must admit that I did not feel my bonds press very heavily. I, on my part, ruled her by means of George, junior, and I did not want to go to dances, and dinners, or the theatre.

I never languished for gaiety; I was now as staid and as subdued as any old woman of seventy, so that being kept in the background fell in with my own wishes and Miranda's. Miranda had no desire that I should ever shine by her side in the social circle.

I knew this, and when people were expected to lunch, or dropped in to afternoon tea, I never appeared.

Down in the country it was different; I liked the more open, easy life. I no longer lived in my very own sitting-room, like a bear in a cage; I spent most of my time out-of-doors, coming in and out as I pleased, and falling more into my place, and into general view, as one of the family.

Karslake was the name of the place—a fine old country seat, quite buried in a park five miles from a station, and a mile from the church and village. It belonged to Sir Anthony, George's uncle, who never lived in it himself, and kindly lent it to Mrs. Karslake for any time she pleased.

Miranda could not bear it. It was too quiet and dull for her, though we had a good many county neighbours—too rural, too far from town; and as I had never heard much about it I was most agreeably amazed when I made its acquaintance.

The house was old and rather ugly. A variety of owners had added to it, and improved (?) it to their individual taste; but it was very large and comfortable, and, for such a big place, homelike. The park, spreading far away all round, was charming; the gardens delicious.

I really began to feel something like myself again, as, with a big hat on my head and only a dog for company, I roamed about the place, made raids upon the flower-beds, or sat under a big haycock reading the last new novel.

We had company. Carriages full of visitors came darting, wending up the long avenue, that curled like a big grey serpent through the park; but Mrs. Karslake and Miranda entertained them. I think my existence was barely guessed at, for I did not go to church with the family, and appear in that public place—the family pew.

I allowed baby's nurse to go in the morning, along with the upper servants, and I went alone, in the afternoon, walking across the fields, in the cool time of the day, and sitting, not in the big Karslake pew, but in one of the free sittings. I did not identify myself in public with the family.

There were various junketings, in which I took no part, tennis and garden-parties. On these occasions I made it a point to keep well out of the way.

I'm sure I was not missed, and I learnt, indirectly (long afterwards), that in answer to any casual polite inquiries, my fair Miranda always said that "her sister-in-law was an invalid, and could not bear society."

When one of Miranda's "afternoons" was impending I generally took a book, and set out, immediately after luncheon, for a long stroll through the woods, resting at intervals in different chosen spots.

One particular day, about five o'clock, I was sitting on the steps of an old time-ruined tea-room, or temple, with my hat off, my dog making a mat of my dress, and my whole attention absorbed in a thrilling story. All at once I heard distant sounds of high sopranos, laughing and talking, and one or two muffled basses responding thereto.

Could it be the garden-party coming up, all the way to the Folly, merely for the sake of having nothing else to do?

I started up, aghast. There was no escape for me, for the only pathway leading to my hitherto

sacred retreat was already occupied, and I was cut off.

I rashed up the steps, and into the old tea-room, which possessed a big rustic table and half-a-dozen chairs, and, seating myself at the farther side of it, put on my hat, pulled it well over my face, and, resting my elbows on the table, pretended to be deeply buried in my book, but, of course, I was listening hard.

Sound ascends; the Folly was on the top of a little hill, and the path to it made the very most of winding round and round.

Voices were distinctly audible, and one well-known one, especially (Miranda), was evidently leading the van.

"Oh, she roams about; we never mind her, or miss her!"

(Who was she?)

"Is she a presentable person?" This from a man with an accent of vague curiosity.

"Oh! it's quite a matter of taste! I do not admire her style—and she is most eccentric—but I fancy men do."

"I should like to see her, and see if I am to be one of the men," said the man.

At this instant he reached the top of the incline, ditto his partner, and he walked up the steps, saying,—

"By Jove! that's a pretty stiff pull!"

And then he turned, and entered, and was face to face with me.

I was not nervous now, and not nearly as much put out as Miranda.

She looked desperately annoyed, and would have carried him away, but quite a crowd of men, and maidens, were hurrying up the steps after her. Perhaps they had visions of a delightful surprise in the shape of tea and ices!

It was in for a penny in for a pound, as far as I was concerned.

"You here, Ellen! How very odd!" she exclaimed, with a curious laugh. "I'm sorry we have invaded your sweet solitude; but we will go," turning to the crowd, with a playful gesture of dismissal.

"Certainly not! Pray don't dream of such a thing, on my account!" standing up, and to my amazement, seeing a familiar face in the crowd—Amy Norton that was, now a rich, well-dowered widow. Mr. Sharp had been so kind as to give her her freedom within less than a year of their marriage.

She hurried over as if we had been bosom friends, and accosted me with rapture.

"So delighted to see you, dear Mrs. Karslake; how well you are looking!" kissing me, before I had time to take breath. "I hope you have good news from Major Karslake!"

Here was effrontery!

"He is quite well, thank you," I said, availing.

"And your dear little boy? I must see him—and when did you hear from Glenmore and the dear Maxwells? Nay, Maxwells no longer; we have all"—(with a sliper)—"changed our names since."

Her train of reflections were broken in upon by Miranda, who said to me very busquely, as if she were throwing the remark at my head,—

"Eden. Colonel Moore wishes to be introduced to you—Colonel Moore, Mrs. George Karslake."

He was the man who had entered first, and found the hill so steep; and yet he had no need, for he was thin and spare, and looked very young to be a colonel. He had very blue eyes, and a short fair moustache, and a very clean-looking face. I know what I mean myself, but cannot describe the *tout ensemble* better. As I stood at the table I noticed that I—in my garden hat and rather tumbled (though clean on that morning) white gown—was the cynosure of every eye. The ladies stared at me with unaffected, hard curiosity, the men with, shall I say respectful, admiration, tempered with surprise. I was introduced to several of both sexes by Miranda in a kind of angry gabble.

I had now come out into society with a vengeance, though not intentionally. Half the neighbourhood had now seen "her eccentric sister-in-law," and to judge by their looks, they did not see anything eccentric about me. Several sordid police inquiries about my absent husband

and my baby—how long I had been home, and how I liked the country; and then there was a general move, and I was swept away with the crowd back to the tennis ground and tea-tables.

Colonel Moore and another man had a polite struggle as to who should walk with me, and it ended in a compromise. I had the escort of both—one on either hand. We were rather a tight fit going down the narrow pathway between laurel and rhododendron and lawns, but luckily we were all slim.

"I am very glad to have the pleasure of meeting you, Mrs. Karslake," said Colonel Moore. Your husband is a great friend of mine. When did you hear from him last?"

This was, indeed, a poser. I am sure I became scarlet, but I fancy that my two companions did not notice my sudden confusion—they were looking straight ahead. So after a momentary hesitation I said what was strictly true.

"Not for some time."

"I've just come back from India," said Colonel Moore, who was full of conversation, "invalided, though you wouldn't think it to look at me. The sea voyage has set me up. I was down with fever; for weeks and weeks Karslake nursed me—we were in the same column—and I can't tell you how good he was to me. I've been out there so long, I'm quite out of it in the way of news; and, as he never mentioned the fact, I never knew he was married till to-day when I came over here, and heard Miss Karslake speak of her sister-in-law. I'm sure you will think it odd," with a laugh, "but Karslake is one of your reserved fellows, and never talks of his own affairs, and being an aide-de-camp to the general—a regular bachelor's billet—you see I never guessed it," all this in a semi-epilogic manner.

"I suppose not," I faltered, feebly. What else was I to say.

"At any rate, I'm delighted to meet you, Mrs. Karslake. I need not tell you what a good fellow your husband is, nor how popular, you know all that; but I'm glad of a chance of telling you how awfully kind he was to me—used to sit up with me night after night; and that's no joke in tents, especially when he had hard work all day." He paused for breath, and I muttered something inaudible, "Meant to say I was very glad that George had had the opportunity," &c.

Meanwhile my left-hand escort had never had a chance of getting in a single word, and I turned to him with relief—he did not know George—and made some original remark about the weather. This led to tennis and other topics, but presently Colonel Moore struck in again.

"The amusing thing is, Mrs. Karslake, that we all made up our minds that Karslake had had what's called a disappointment, he is such a grave sort of fellow. But now, of course, I account for his grave looks in another fashion—you can guess what I mean," with a complimentary and significant smile.

"I really cannot, I assure you," with my usual candour.

"Why, at being separated from you, of course; and I really don't wonder that he has such an absent air at times. I can quite understand it now," in a tone of serious concern.

Poor man! Poor Colonel Moore! Little did he know what he was talking about.

I said nothing. Silence is safe, silence is golden, and my silence was only broken by our arrival at the tea-tables spread under fine large elms near the tennis ground, and covered with all manner of inviting dainties—strawberries and cream, tea and coffee, ices, hot cakes, sweet cakes, apricots, shortbread, &c. Everyone seemed cheerful at the prospect.

I sat down in a wicker chair near one of these tables, and to my surprise Miranda suggested that I should pour out the tea. I had very serious doubts about mixing with the company at all. I ought to have strayed away down a side walk and escaped. I was not dressed for the part. I glanced about at all the girls and young married women in such pretty, fashionable, fresh costumes, and felt myself quite beneath the occasion and a dowdy, but I could not run away now, so I drew up my chair and commenced my allotted task.

My mother-in-law, who now arrived with three

other old ladies in tow—old ladies, to whom, I am perfectly certain, she had been introducing her grandson, now gazed at me spell-bound with astonishment, but eventually accepted the situation and a cup of tea.

I heard Colonel Moore going up to her and saying,—

"I am so glad to meet Mrs. George Karslake. I've been telling her all about George, and how good he has been. You know we were schoolfellows, and I have also impressed upon her how fearfully down he is on his luck, and how he misses her!"

I did not venture to look at my mother-in-law during this awkward speech. I only humbly trusted that she would be able to command her countenance. My face I'm certain was what is known as all colours; and yet why, I said to myself, angrily, should I blush? In my secret soul I had no cause of shame. I now felt, without actually turning round, that someone had softly subsided into the seat beside mine—a lady who used quite a half-pint of perfume on her handkerchief—Mrs. Sharp, née Lily Norton. She accosted me in a sweet voice, saying,—

"Dear Mrs. Karslake, I want a nice little chat with you so much. I am so fond of talking of old times. How well you are looking!" she added, deliberately, "and you look ridiculously young. Now pray, with a little complacent laugh, "how do you find me?"

"You are looking remarkably well," I said, surveying her calmly. She was a pretty woman, in a fair, small, hard style. There were no blushes, or dimples, or quick changes of expression in her face—it always wore the same. She was magnificently dressed, and I am not certain, after I had scrutinised her closely, that her complexion was not slightly artistic. "I never saw you looking better!" I added, politely.

"Oh, dear, don't say that!" throwing up her pale grey gloves. "I have had great troubles, as you know, dear. Dear Robert's death (leaving her indispensible mistress of a large fortune, and money her god) was a fearful blow. He was much older than me, you know—not quite, to you I may say it, the husband for a young girl who was all heart!" (What nonsense was this?) "I made a mistake," shaking her head, dolefully. "But we need not talk of it now. We are all—looking hard at me—" liable to make mistakes in the most important crisis of our lives—the bestowal of ourselves in marriage. Men make these fearful blunders, too; don't you think so?"

"No doubt," I said, ironically, as I filled up two cups, and wished from the bottom of my soul she would go away and take her confidences elsewhere; but no, she leaned over me and said,—

"Now, that is the very last, I see. Do, do come along under those nice trees over there, and indulge me in a *l'ite à-l'ite*. It has been such an unexpected pleasure to see you! Do you know that I have taken a little country place not far from here. I shall expect you to visit me often. There is nothing like the friends of one's girlhood."

But this was all rubbish. I knew it, and she also knew it. Our acquaintance had been of the slightest.

She had no occasion to prosecute my society then. Query: What did she want now?

I found myself padding along the grass with her presently alone, she, to my disgust, leaning heavily on my reluctant arm.

"I was so amused at poor dear Colonel Moore talking in that unfortunate way about you and George," she said, smilingly.

What right had she to call him George?

"Of course he has been abroad so long, poor man! He is out of everything, and doesn't know significantly."

"Know what?" I asked, my heart beating very fast, indeed.

"What everyone else knows, my sweet child, that," now speaking in a lower key, "you and George don't get on—"

"You have no reason to say so," I said in my most chilling manner.

"No, but I have the privilege of an old friend. Ah, my dear, my dear! I am truly sorry for you!—sorry for myself, and sorry for him," she pronounced, with emphatic gravity.

"Pray explain yourself."

"I will," she said, indifferently. "You see, you know, I was engaged to George, and he was madly in love with me. In a moment of girlish caprice I changed my mind, and have regretted it ever since—yes, ever since," shaking her head up and down.

"But I think you should keep the expression of your regrets from me, his wife," I said, very stiffly, and I now found that there was a vast reservoir of latent jealousy in my disposition.

The idea of this woman daring to tell me to my face that she was exceedingly sorry she had not married George made me feel very odd and very angry; but worse was coming.

"And that's not all," she continued, in a tearful voice. "He, poor fellow! never got over it! I have reason to know that he rushed into marriage with you, whom, you remember, when you were at Glenmore, he could not bear, and it has all recurred on his own head. A marriage without love, as I found to my cost, is misery!" and she sighed like a furnace, and cast down her eyes affectedly.

I now took her hand firmly away from my arm, and stopped, and surveyed her for several seconds.

I felt so angry, in such a passion, I was nearly choked. I tried to put a constraint on myself, but when I spoke, my voice shook in a most undignified manner. Anyone could see that I was in a rage.

"Do you wish to infer that George married me purely out of pique, and that—I wonder you have the face to hint it—he loves you still?"

She made no answer verbally; but a smile of intense self-satisfaction said "yes" in capital letters.

"Pray disabuse your mind of such a notion, for it is a foolish and groundless one. George married me for love, and nothing else. He had long ceased to think of you."

"Doubtless he told you so. It was but natural. Men's vows, we know, are writ in sand. I can show hard facts. You cannot deny that he was desperately in love with me once, and hated you!" looking me full in the face with her hard, light eyes.

"No, I'm quite prepared to admit that; but you will allow the adage, 'Soon hot, soon cold'; and another, that 'There is nothing like beginning with a little aversion.'"

"Old sayings have nothing to do with this. I wrecked my own happiness. I am the pivot of your destinies."

Here was arrogance!

"I wrecked his happiness also, and, indirectly, yours. Think as you please; a man like him never gives his love twice, much less twice within a year. I'm not telling you all this from a mere idle spirit of mischief. I'm only moralising—sadly moralising. Of course, had he not married you all would be well now; but fate has been against us all three. You do not care for George. You married him to escape poverty and to have a comfortable home over your head. A little bird whispered to me that you made George very jealous, and that he had left you in anger for ever."

"Pardon me, madam; on that point you are quite misinformed," and I beg to add that such utter, wanton impertinence, such gratuitous insolence, and such barefaced, openly-avowed love for a married man was never heard before!"

"You cannot deny what I have said," she said, in a blustering manner, her pale face red with passion. "It is all true."

"You may think so; but it is of no consequence," I replied, now becoming cooler as she waxed furious. "I am really at a loss to know what you mean or what you want by bringing me here and pouring out all this malice into my ear."

"If you had received my confidence in the spirit in which it was intended you would have known I had my reasons. I would have put you on your guard for old times' sake. After all, if I don't tell you some one else will (unable to resist the temptation). Major Karlake, you know, went up on two months' leave to Murree, and the whole place was ringing with talk about him and a doctor's wife."

"He flirted scandalously. If you don't believe me ask him some day about Mrs. Arthur Thorn, and how she ran away from her husband, and who she ran away to.

"I see your people moving, so I must hurry back. George is your husband, not mine. I strongly advise you to bring him to book. These designing married women when they get hold of a young man with plenty of money they generally make a nice fool of him. Forewarned is forearmed. Don't be furious. I'm speaking for your good. Good-bye!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Mrs. SHARP walked away quickly, as if to give me no chance of making any possible reply. She had fired the last shot and had the last word.

I stood quite still, my breath coming very fast, my heart beating double-quick time, as I watched her sailing across the sward with the air of a duchess, and rejoining the rest of the party.

What did she mean? What had been her object in saying all these horrible things to me? Passion—humiliation, that she should guess at the real state of affairs—and burning jealousy consumed me.

She was a dog in the manger. She would not marry George herself, and was furious because he had married me; she was sorry for her mistake, and was resolved to vent her spite on some one. I was to be the scapegoat—everyone's scapegoat, seemingly.

I had wit enough to understand her as I walked over and sat down on a low rustic seat. She had always been a detestable girl, a mischief-maker even in her teens. What a fool I had been to give way to my temper! the proper thing for me to have done would have been to have listened in silence, and then shrugged my shoulders, and laughed in her face.

This was, however, much easier in thought than in practice. Again, what about Mrs. Thorn? That must be untrue, a fiction invented on the spur of the moment.

As these thoughts were slowly revolving in my head I sat for fully an hour without moving. I was resolved to rise superior to Mrs. Sharp if I could. The worst of it was she was a great friend of Miranda's, and as she lived in the neighbourhood of course I was bound to come across her if ever I went into society.

Here was another excellent reason for remaining in seclusion, had a reason been required.

My reverie was interrupted by hearing my own name called—called very shrilly and excitedly by Miranda.

"Ellen—Ellen! where are you?" she said, hurrying over the turf at very unusual speed.

I knew that the guests had long departed, that it was too early for dinner—what did she want?

"What is it?" I asked, getting up and walking down the path to meet her.

"Mother sent me to look for you," she said, waving an orange envelope and piece of pink paper in her hand.

I thought at once of George—of bad news—and my heart literally stood still. I presume that my ghastly face was an index to my feelings, for she said,—

"Oh! it's no bad news—it's nothing about George—but Sir Anthony is dead."

"Is he really?" I remarked, after I had got over the first revulsion of feeling. "Poor man, it must have been sudden; you did not even know that he was ill."

"It was apoplexy; seized yesterday, died last night. I'm glad the telegram did not come before, or I would have had to put off the tennis party. Come in, mother wants to see you. She is rather cut up—Sir Anthony was very good to her. It will be an awful nuisance going into black in the middle of summer. You will have to wear mourning too," as if there was some consolation in that.

"I—why? He is no relation to me."

"But he is to us, and that is the same thing."

I found my mother-in-law in a tearful state—not crying heartily or uproariously, as I did myself, but I suppose this is peculiar to young people—seated in a low chair, making little dabs at her eyes with the corner of her elegant handkerchief.

"Well, my dear, this has been a blow; only sixty-seven, and carried off in a few hours! I feel quite upset. Miranda, ring the bell; I will take a glass of port wine. Vokes," to the butler, "you can bring me in a glass of port and a biscuit. I shall not go in to dinner, but Lady Karlake and Miss Karlake will dine as usual."

I felt a kind of shock as she gave her orders. Was I then Lady Karlake? Of course I was, if George was the next baronet. I did not feel a bit elated, as I might have done once upon a time. What good would this handle to my name do me—this coronet on my handkerchief?

"Yes," said Miranda, as if swallowing some very unpleasant idea, "I had not thought of that before. Of course you are Lady Karlake now George is Sir George; but I don't suppose it will make any difference. He will never leave the army and settle down at Karlake."

"I wish he would. He ought to—it is his duty. I shall write out to him on the subject at once, and put the case very strongly," said his mother, with unusual energy.

"I don't think he will mind you much. He has always been fond of soldiering; he likes a roving life, and as we can see," looking rudely at me, "is not at all inclined to sit closely at the domestic hearth. Indeed, for my part, I think it is a great mistake for a man to marry and tie himself down to a wife before he is forty; he ought to rove about and see the world, and make the most of his youth."

"Miranda, my dear, you are talking nonsense," said her mother, severely; "and now there is the dressing bell, and you have no time to lose."

Time went on, and excepting that I was called Lady Karlake and wore a black dress, there was no change whatever in our domestic affairs. Mrs. Karlake ostensibly managed the house, but the real ruler was Miranda; she sat at the head of the table at dinner, she poured out tea, she ordered the servants, issued invitations, kept the key of the post-bag, took out the carriage, made out the list of books for Mudie's, and, in short, reigned supreme.

I never dreamt of interfering; I was a mere cipher in the house. I spent my time partly in the nursery, partly in the wood, and partly in the garden.

I was very fond of gardening, and one must have some occupation besides sewing and reading. I did not merely pick flowers, and call that gardening, nor potter here and there with a trowel. No, I really put on a large apron with big pockets, and worked as I used to do at the castle.

A big neglected border, a wild scene of bushes of lavender, half dead, and fuchsias, and some hideous (in my opinion) sunflowers, had been assigned to me by Campbell, the head-gardener, a Scotchman.

He approved of my labours, and "liked to see a lady so taken up with flowers as I was," to quote his words; and altogether he regarded my operations with much favour, but Miranda did not look upon them in the same light. She did not care for flowers herself excepting as an adjunct to her dress in the form of a bouquet; and she did not like to see me taking liberties with the garden; for after a time I extended my border and paid attention to more than one plot.

She came upon me suddenly one afternoon, as I was grubbing away down on my knees on the gravel, my dress plumed up round me in the act of planting a very nice tea-rose. I had scattered some earth on the walk, and she said to me in a very peevish, not to say authoritative, voice—

"Dear me, Ellen, what a terrible mess you are making! You really cannot have the place in such a mess. You must not garden so near the front; get a bit in the lower end from Campbell, and I daresay he will allow you to do your worst there;



CAMPBELL GAVE SOME KIND OF A CHUCKLE, AND STOOD GAZING AFTER MISS KARSLAKE.

but you know very well we can't have the front garden untidy."

I felt like an naughty child who had just been sharply scolded, and the more so as Campbell was looking on and listening. I became very red and apologetic, and assured her humbly that I really was doing no harm, that I was improving the border, and that I would clear away all the litter with my own hands; but even this did not appease her.

" You may go on for to-day, but after this I do beg you won't interfere with the gardeners. You can garden, as I have said, in the less conspicuous places down at the lower end," and then she walked on exactly as if she had been talking to a servant, and had given an order that she expected to find obeyed.

I heard Campbell give some kind of chuckle, and I looked up and saw him gazing after her with a very funny expression on his keen, Scotch face.

" One would think to hear Miss Karlake," and then he stopped, as if his usual caution had come to his rescue.

" Think what, Campbell ! " I said, rising and shaking the earth out of my apron.

" Why, that her garden was Miss Karlake's own and not yours ? I don't know who has a better right to dig and plant when she has a mind to than your ladyship. The place is all Sir George's—every road and every stone. Ay, dear me ! but Miss Miranda was always a queer, masterful young lady, and she can't get it out of her head yet that it is not all hers, for she was mistress and master in Sir Anthony's time. He never came near it, and Mrs. Karlake is a quiet lady."

Which meant, as I knew, that Mrs. Karlake, stiff and stern as she looked, was entirely ruled by her only daughter.

This notion, that the place being George's was of course mine, had never struck me before.

I had been so very much in the background the last year that it had never dawned on me until now that I had any claim to a front seat.

Now I saw quite clearly how stupid I had been, and how stupid Miranda must think me.

I walked up and down the gravel walks, turning over this new idea in my mind, and getting myself to look at myself from a new point of view.

I was Lady Karlake of Karlake (and a pretty figure I was, walking very slowly to and fro, in a battered old straw hat, a holland apron, and wearing a pair of awful garden gloves—gloves coated with mould from my recent operations).

I had been left by George in disgrace, but knew very well that, bad as it looked, I was undeserving of such treatment, being innocent.

He did not know that, nor believe it ; but I knew it. My heart was as clear as little George's in the nursery.

I had been left under a cloud, in disgrace, and in a kind of comfortable captivity, and I had accepted all this just as naturally as if it were my rightful, well-deserved due.

I had been humble, contrite, and had effaced myself from society, and let myself be forgotten by my friends, and what for ? For what was I being punished ? For trying to do my duty, and nothing else !

There must be an end to this, I said, with sudden decision, as I came to the turn of a path, and stood there looking at the setting sun.

I have been doing myself a great wrong in accepting the situation. I should have made father clear it all up with George, instead of accepting my sentence without a word.

I see that my folly has been seized upon by Miranda. She does not wish to see me take up my position in society as George's wife. She, finding me so meek, and so humble, and unassuming, has placed me even farther back than George originally left me. I am half nurse, half a poor relation ; but I shall change it all, and soon.

I am George's wife. This is his house and mine. Miranda is but my guest ; but she has ruled so long she cannot realise that fact, and

won't, if she can help it. I shall give her a little longer tether, and then I shall speak. Campbell, the gardener, had unintentionally fired a mine.

(To be continued.)

THE experts in the different branches of the sciences are now pretty well agreed that there are several species of fish, reptiles and insects which never sleep during their stay in this world. Among the fish it is now positively known that the pike, the salmon, and the goldfish never sleep at all. Also that there are several others of the fish family that never sleep more than a few minutes during a month, and which take no rest whatever during the breeding season. There are dozens of species of flies (mostly tropical) which never indulge in slumber, and from three to five species of serpents on each of the continents which the naturalists have never yet been able to catch napping.

It is interesting to note that the choice of white for wedding-dresses is comparatively a modern fashion. The Roman brides wore yellow, and in most Eastern countries pink is the bridal colour. During the Middle Ages the Renaissance brides wore crimson, and most of the Plantagenet and Tudor queens were married in this vivid hue, which is still popular in parts of Brittany, where the bride is usually dressed in crimson brocade. It was Mary Stuart who first changed the colour of bridal garments. At her marriage with Francis II, of France, in 1553—which took place not before the altar, but before the great doors of Notre Dame—she was gowned in white brocade, with a train of pale-blue Persian velvet, six yards in length. This innovation caused quite a stir in the fashionable world of that time. It was not, however, till quite the end of the seventeenth century that pure white—the colour hitherto worn by royal French widows—became popular for bridal garments in England.



A CRACKED, DISCORDANT VOICE, MUTTERED, "I HATE HIM TOO!"

LORD KINGSLEY'S HEIR.

—101—

CHAPTER XL

FACE to face they stood, the weary world-tossed woman who had gone through such a bitter struggle with poverty, and in the end married a man she feared and disliked to secure bread for her baby boy, and the nobleman who, save for the fact that no child of his lived to inherit his wealth, had passed a life as free from trouble as can be imagined.

Time rolled back for both of them on that fair summer morning. Mrs. Thorn thought of the days of her girlhood, when a smile or a kindly greeting from the young Viscount had been an honour to every man, woman, or child around his father's castle. Lord Kingsley remembered the lovely girl who had been known as "Pretty Molly Dean."

Between then and now stretched nearly twenty-five years; the whole romance of his life and the tragedy of hers had been compressed by the interval, now they stood together, man and woman, with the glory of youth behind them, each vaguely distrustful of the other.

It was the lawyer who broke the silence, and to the strained feelings of the other two his quiet commonplace came as a relief.

"You have come about the advertisement, I believe," said Mr. Jarvis, quietly; "what have you to tell us?"

A faint pink flush tinged the poor woman's face, bringing back a little of the beauty of her youth.

"I was 'Mrs. Johns,'" she answered, simply. "I had hoped that part of my life was forgotten; but your advertisement made me think that for my boy's sake I ought to come forward."

Lord Kingsley broke in impetuously—

"You were my brother's wife. You need not speak to me of proofs. My friend Talbot, who is now in England, told me he was at your wed-

ding. As there is a Heaven above us, until he spoke to me I believed John had died unmarried."

"Your father knew the truth," said Mary Thorn, with a touch of reproof in her voice, "and your brother William."

"They never told me. On his deathbed I think something weighed on my father's conscience, and now I believe it was his treatment of you, and that he would fain have revealed the truth to me; but at the time I thought his uneasiness only the wanderings of a dying man."

"Lord Kingsley would not have been so cruel if he had been alone," said the woman, slowly; "and perhaps I was to blame. I never told him of the child that was coming. I was afraid he would take my baby from me."

"And the child was born alive!"

"Oh, yes," and a wonderful flush of mother-love and pride lit up her face, "and from the hour they put him into my arms he has been at once my greatest joy and sorrow, joy, because he reminded me of Jack; sorrow, because I could never forgive myself for having wronged him of his rightful position. He was your father's grandchild, and I know, for his son's sake, Lord Kingsley would have given him an education and a start in life; but he was all I had. I would not give him up, and so I robbed him of his birthright."

"And he is alive!"

"Yea, he was twenty-two this June; but he looks older. He is like his father, only graver. No mother ever had a better son."

Lord Kingsley groaned. He pictured the lad living with his widowed mother in a working-man's cottage, and bringing her home his week's wages on a Saturday night.

He pictured a sort of superior mechanic with a cockney twang, and it was agony to him to think this youth must one day be master of Kingsley Abbey.

"He lives with you, of course!"

She shook her head.

"I married again before he was two years old.

I had to do it, or the baby and I would both have starved. I have nothing to say against my second husband. He is an industrious Christian man; but he never cared for my son, and dearly as I loved the boy it was a comfort to me when he got a situation at a distance."

"In trade, I suppose?" and Lord Kingsley imagined his nephew standing behind the counter of some small country shop.

She shook her head.

"I couldn't bear the idea of trade for Jack's son. I got him a clerkship first, it seemed so genteel; and this summer, after being 'out' for a good five weeks, he had the luck to be chosen as secretary by a gentleman. Mr. Grey's quite famous among learned people, so may-be you have heard of him, Lord Kingsley?"

"You don't mean that your boy is Ronald Thorn?"

"Yes," she admitted, surprised at his excitement. "He was christened Ronald after you. Poor Jack made me promise if the child was a boy he should be named for you. Then it's only lately Ronald has known he is not the son of my present husband, and so he has always been called by Mr. Thorn's name. When he was going away I offered to tell him everything. I thought he would like to bear his father's family name, but he refused."

"Refused!" exclaimed the lawyer, "but why?"

"He said he had not proved his right to it; he told me that just knowing he was a gentleman's son would spur him on, and that when he had won a position for himself and was earning his living in a way not to discredit his relatives he would ask me for his father's name, and see if his uncle had a kindly welcome for his dead brother's son."

Mr. Jarvis (who we may whisper here simply detested William Thorndale) smiled, well pleased.

"I rather think, Lord Kingsley, you will have an heir to be proud of."

Mrs. Thorn caught up the word.

"Your heir! You can't mean my boy will be that?"

"Probably," said the Marquis, gravely. "Seeing that I have neither son nor daughter. Mrs. Thorn, it may surprise you to hear that I have met your son."

She started.

"Met Ronald?"

"Only once. I paid a flying visit to my brother-in-law, Mr. Grey, and I saw his secretary for a short time; it seemed to me the young fellow had a vague, shadowy resemblance to our family."

Mr. Jarvis interposed.

"My Lord, you must not take too much for granted. Like you I am quite convinced of the truth of this lady's story, but the law requires proofs, and in the interests of Mr. William Thorndale you must have the fullest legal testimony before you recognise Mr.—ahem, Thorn as your heir."

The mother looked troubled, then she re-collected herself and said, gravely,—

"For the sake of the old times, the dear old times, when we were both young, Lord Kingsley, will you grant me a favour?"

"I will do anything in my power. Believe me, had I known of your marriage, you would have had neither poverty nor neglect to suffer."

"I want you not to breathe a word to Ronald until you are perfectly convinced of his identity. I have brought a few papers, certificates and letters with me. I can give you the address of the doctor who attended me when Ronald was born, and tell you the church where he was christened, but I want you to say nothing to him until you are positive he is your brother's son."

"You are afraid of exciting false hopes?"

"I don't want him to be disappointed; he takes things so to heart."

"My brother-in-law speaks most highly of him. Do you not know Grey was my sister's husband? Did it not strike you your son might be going to his uncle?"

"Never once. I had lost sight of the family before Lady Agnes married, and Grey is not an uncommon name."

"How did your son fall in with Grey?"

"It was his cousin who told him Mr. Grey was seeking a secretary: that is his step-cousin; my husband's sister lets lodgings, and Mr. Grey lived with her some time."

"I know he buried himself in some obscure place at Camberwell."

"It's not obscure," corrected Mrs. Thorn; "the house faces the Green, and the traffic makes it quite lively. Alice is a very nice girl, and a pretty one, too."

A chill of apprehension seized on Lord Kingsley. Had he only found his heir to discover the young man had an entanglement with a girl in humble life?

"Am I to understand your son is engaged to Miss Dale?"

Mrs. Thorn hesitated.

"They are not 'promised,'" she said at last; "but Alice and Ronald have always cared for each other ever since they were little children; the girl's always been fonder of him than his own sisters have; she's an only, child and will have a nice little bit of money some day, while my boy earned thirty shillings a week, and had no prospects. Things being like that he could not propose to her."

"But you think he cared?"

"He was always fond of Alice," said Mrs. Thorn, believing she spoke the truth, "and she's a very superior young woman."

Lord Kingsley rose, as though to end the interview.

"The case shall have the fullest possible investigation, I promise."

"And if you are satisfied, my boy will come in for everything."

Lord Kingsley winced.

"He can claim nothing in my lifetime. If I die childless he will be the next Marquis of Kingsley. Rest assured your son shall have his rights in every detail."

"And," she hesitated, "it won't be in the newspapers, will it?"

Mr. Jarvis smiled.

"There may be a paragraph in one or two of the society journals. I'll send them on if you like."

"Oh, no!" and Mrs. Thorn looked terrified. "I only meant if it were not in the papers there would be no need for me to say anything to Mr. Thorn. I am afraid he would be furious if he found out Ronald was to be well off."

"Why does he dislike him?" asked the Marquis. "If he has brought him up as his own child you would think he must care for him."

"He's jealous of him. None of the other children have been so dear to me as Ronald, and their father resents it for their sake; and then Silas is a little near. He sets to work and calculates all the boy has cost him, and thinks what he could do with the money if he had it now till he gets savage."

"At any rate that part of the obligation can be discharged," said the Marquis, haughtily. "I don't choose my nephew to be indebted to grudging charity. How much does Mr. Thorn suppose he has lost by Ronald?"

"The boy has kept himself of late years," said Mary Thorn; "but for fifteen years, I suppose, my husband was at the expense of him. Silas says he cost us ten shillings a week all that time; but I took in needlework myself to lessen the expense, and I am sure five shillings would be nearer the mark."

"Say thirty pounds a year," returned Lord Kingsley, "for fifteen years, that's four hundred and fifty pounds. Jarvis, send one of your clerks down to Peckham with that amount, and debit it to me. You need mention no names, only say that Ronald's uncle does not choose him to remain under an obligation to his step-father."

Mrs. Thorn carried away the fifty pounds promised as a reward for her own address, and was much exercised in mind as to how Silas would receive Lord Kingsley's ambassador. She was not kept long in suspense; that very afternoon as they sat at tea there came a resounding knock at the front door, and one of the children, flying to open it, returned with the news a gentleman wanted to see "father" on business.

"I shouldn't wonder if it was a call to preach next Sunday," said Silas to his wife; "you'd better come with me into the parlour, Mary. You haven't much opinion of your husband yourself, so it just as well you should hear what others think of him."

Mr. Jarvis's smart, well-dressed articled clerk had probably never been on such a strange mission before. They found him standing bolt upright in the dreary little room, apparently afraid to trust himself on one of the extremely slippery chairs.

Mr. Thorn stared at him. An acute man, whose business was concerned, he knew at once that this was no emissary from the Bible Brethren, and straightway put him down as a canvasser, one of those well-spoken young men who try to induce you to buy whatever they get a commission on, from a pound of tea to a bicycle.

"My name is Clive," began the stranger, "and I am sent by Mr. Jarvis, of the firm of Jarvis and Jarvis, to say—"

But here Silas interrupted him.

"We don't want any cheap tea. I deal in the article myself, and my wife has no need of a sewing machine, a tricycle, or a harmonium. We want nothing, so you'd better go to those who do."

Mr. Clive smiled.

"Please hear me out, sir. I haven't come to sell you anything, but only to bring a message from my principals, lawyers in the Temple."

Silas looked taken aback.

"I never did anything people could have the law on me for; but you had better go on."

Mr. Clive nodded; truth to say, he was very much amused at the whole affair.

"One of Mr. Jarvis's clients heard lately, by accident, that his nephew was indebted to you for several years of board and lodging. I refer to a young man known as Ronald Thorn."

"That's so," admitted the preacher; "he's my wife's son, and I had to keep him entirely for fifteen years. Mrs. Thorn always said we didn't miss the boy's food; but women don't under-

stand accounts, and I always maintain that I lost a good two hundred over the lad."

"His uncle is of the same opinion; only he puts it at rather a higher figure. In short, Mr. Thorn, I am instructed to pay you four hundred and fifty pounds in Bank of England notes, if you will sign a paper stating that you have been fully recompensed for all the expense the young man may have been to you. I have the form of receipt here."

Mr. Thorn could hardly believe his ears. He took the slip of paper almost as though he imagined it concealed some deep-laid trap to get him at a disadvantage; but it was perfectly harmless, and merely signified that four hundred and fifty pounds had been received from Messrs. Jarvis and Jarvis as full payment for all the expenses incidental to the board and education of his step-son Ronald.

Thorn looked at his wife.

"Is this a trick of yours?"

The poor woman shook her head.

"I never asked anyone to send you money, but I'm glad you won't be a loser by Ronald after all."

So Silas Thorn signed the receipt; the clerk put it in his pocket-book and departed, leaving him gloating over the pile of crisp bank notes. Mrs. Thorn turned away with a sort of choked sob; she could not bear to look at that money; to her it seemed the price paid for her renunciation of her son.

CHAPTER XII.

LORD KINGSLEY waited till every legal proof was forthcoming, and Jarvis and Jarvis told him the Honourable Ronald Thorndale's identity was established beyond the shadow of doubt, and then he braced himself for three ordeals, each more or less painful, yet each inevitable.

These were telling his wife of the discovery of a nearer heir than her favourite, Will; breaking the same news to the young gentleman himself; and, last of all, telling Mr. Grey's secretary that he must take his place as heir of Kingsley Abbey. The latter task seemed the easiest, but it was not so really. The Marquis was intensely proud of his family honour, and to make things plain to Ronald he would be forced to speak evil of his brother William; while, though he admitted that Mr. Grey had spoken in the highest terms of his secretary, there was something most humiliating to the wealthy nobleman to have to acknowledge the ex-clerk as his heir.

What was to be done first Lord Kingsley hardly knew; but he dreaded his wife learning the truth from any side wind, and he longed for her sympathy; and so in the end he went straight down to Kingsley Abbey, where a large party was expected for the first of September, his visit to London having taken place between the first slaughter of the grouse and the day fatal to partridges.

He had not announced the hour of his arrival, so he had to drive home in a hired fly. As he came up the drive he saw his wife busily among the flower-beds, and, stopping his John, he alighted, leaving his trap to go on to the house in solitary state.

"Jessy!"

"Oh! Ronald, I am so glad you have come!" she said, frankly; "here's the thirtieth of August, and a dozen people due to-morrow. I have worried myself nearly stupid fearing you would not be here in time to welcome them."

"You see I have not failed you, dear."

He loved his wife tenderly; but there were times when he wished his Jessy had had a little stronger character. Lady Kingsley was one of those women who must lean on some one, but whose will was yet strong enough to give her very strong opinions of her own. Her husband knew perfectly well there would be trouble over what he had to tell her.

"Where's Elizabeth?" he asked, more to gain time than from any great anxiety as to his sister-in-law's movements.

"She went home yesterday with Viola."

"I thought they were to be here some weeks longer!" he said, in surprise.

"Well, their own house is only three miles off, and it made it very awkward their being here, since you were bent on keeping Will away from his home till Viola had gone."

Lord Kingsley and his wife never quarrelled and on any difference of opinion, it was generally the Marquis who gave way. He felt now that a crisis was coming, when for the first time in his life he must deliberately thwart his Jessy.

"Let us come into the house," he said, gravely, "for I have a good deal to tell you."

"It is just as well that we should understand each other," she returned, quietly. "I think you have been terribly unjust to Will."

Lord Kingsley led the way through the open French windows to his wife's boudoir. He wanted to feel secure from interruption before he began his budget. Lady Kingsley, a little surprised at his silence, went on complaining.

"After all, Will did nothing so very dreadful. All's fair in love and war. Viola treated him like the dirt under her feet, and I for one think he was justified in his little ruse."

"And I think it was a cruel, dastardly outrage, unworthy a gentleman. I shall never feel quite the same to Will again and I think my sentence of banishment until Viola had left us was really far too light a punishment."

"He was miserable abroad," said the Marchioness. "You had given him far too little money. He could not enjoy any of the pleasures suited to his age, and it was not seemly that your heir should be away, when the Abbey was full of guests."

"Did you ask your sister to leave?" he demanded, coldly.

"No; but I told Viola it was absurd of her to object to meeting Will. The next morning Elizabeth said they must be going home. I telegraphed to Will, and he got here last night."

"Do you mean that he is here now?"

"Yes."

"You don't know the mischief you have done, Jessy."

"I can't see any mischief," she returned. "It would have been quite a scandal if Will had not been here for the first."

"Where is he now?"

"Out with the keepers looking at the preparations. He is quite an indefatigable sportsman."

"He will be in to dinner?"

"Oh, yes, long before, for we do not dine till eight. We shall be quite alone to-night. Tomorrow all the world will be upon us."

Lord Kingsley sat in blank silence meditating how he could best break the news to her; a sentence about "the sins of the father being visited upon the children" haunted his thoughts; but for Will's unfriendly attitude to Lady John Thorndale, years ago, this terrible surprise could not be in store for his only son. Will would have been brought up to expect nothing but a meagre younger son's portion, and perhaps—who knew!—have been a better man.

"I can't understand you, Ronald," said his wife, irritably. "What is the matter? Surely you can't resent my having Will here. We have no children, and he is nearest to me in the world after you. Surely you can't be angry at my wanting him here."

"I am never angry with you, Jessy."

"But you look in the depth of misery."

"I have bad news for you, dear, and I don't know how to tell it you."

Her face softened strangely. Lady Kingsley had many faults, but she loved her husband tenderly. She went up to him now and took his hand.

"Don't tell me you are ill, Ronald. Don't say these frequent absences and the change everyone has noticed in you are caused by disease. I can bear anything but that."

"I am perfectly well, dear, never better."

"Then what is it?"

"You insist upon knowing?"

"I do."

He held both her hands in his. He spoke as gently as though she had been a sick child.

"Have you ever thought of the time when I must leave you Jessy, and pictured Will in my place?"

"I have not pictured it. I have known, of

course, that Will must come after us, but I never thought about it. I always hoped, Ronald, that I should die before you."

He stooped and kissed her forehead.

"Bear it bravely, Jessy. When I die Will can never be master here. There is, they tell me, a nearer heir."

Lady Kingsley burst into a vehement denial.

"You can't mean it! It can't be true! William was your only brother, just as Will is his only child."

"William was my only brother when I married you, Jessy; but surely you know—the peerage would have told you—that we do not come next in age. One died between us."

"You can't mean that your brother John never died at all, and has come back to claim things?"

"John died right enough, poor fellow; but he left a wife and child. His son is my lawful heir, and Will can inherit nothing in the world but what I save for him."

"Ronald, it can't be true!"

"It is."

"And how long have you known it?"

"You remember the first time Talbot dined with us, June it was. Well, the first fear of this arose then. He had been at Jack's wedding, and asked what had become of the widow."

"I wish Mr. Talbot had stayed in Australia," said the Marchioness, fretfully. "What right had he to interfere!"

"The right of a brave man to speak the truth. From that evening, Jessy, I have had but one object in life, to find out if John's child were still living."

"And this is the meaning of all your journeys, the strange restlessness which puzzled us so?"

"Yes. I don't think, Jessy, I could have died with the mystery unsolved. I owed it to my property that there should be no long and tedious law-suit to decide who was my heir. I owed it to Will, if indeed he were not the heir, to put him out of his fool's paradise at once."

A dead silence, a dogged look of obstinacy marred Lady Kingsley's face.

"I will never give up Will," she said, bitterly; "and I shall hate the other young man, for his sake."

"Dear, do be reasonable," implored her husband; "my nephew Ronald has never wronged Will by thought or deed. He does not even know of his claim to Kingsley. I am not an old man, Jessy. I may live several years, and I promise you I will do my utmost to save a small fortune for Will."

"Viola must marry him," decreed the Marchioness; "my dowry will revert to her, as I have no children. If she is Will's wife that will be something for them."

"I do not think Viola likely to marry him. The better plan by far would be for him to choose a profession and study hard at it. While I live I can make him an ample allowance. It will be best for all of us that he should go out into the world, there is no opening for him near us; besides, it would be terribly bitter for him to see his cousin step into his shoes."

"He never shall," said Lady Kingsley. "While you live, John's son can't claim a shilling of your property. You will want every penny you can scrape together for my poor boy."

"Jessy, you are talking wildly. Ronald Thorndale must come here and be openly acknowledged as my heir. I had thought of his living with us, it is the only way I can think of for familiarising him with the duties of his position. Remember, it is not his fault he comes to us as a stranger."

"Is your mind quite made up?"

"Perfectly, Jessy."

"I will never welcome him. I will never treat him as a relation. I shall make him feel he is an interloper and Will's despoiler."

"You will have kinder thoughts later," said Lord Kingsley, gently. "Jessy, we never had a quarrel in our lives; are we to begin now?"

"It is your fault."

"I think not. I assure you I feel intensely sorry for Will; it is by no fault of his own that this cruel misfortune has befallen him; but I

must think of the other. Ronald is my nephew as much as Will."

"Who was his mother?"

It was the question her husband had dreaded, and for a moment he hesitated.

Lady Kingsley noticed this, and went on bitterly—

"But I need not ask you. She was no gentlewoman, or her marriage wouldn't have been kept a secret all these years. Your brother John made some disgraceful stolen marriage, and the young man you want to put in Will's place is one of the masses."

"Lady John Thorndale was not low," said the Marquis, coldly, for he felt annoyed. "If you must know her origin, Jessy, she was the only child of my father's gamekeeper."

"A gamekeeper's daughter, and you expect me to have her son here!"

"I hope so," said the Marquis, gently; "for my sake, Jessy, try and make the best of it. Remember, dear, it is a case where we have no choice."

"We have a choice," she retorted; "these proofs could be suppressed."

She left the room; left it at open rancour with her husband.

Lord Kingsley sighed, and wondered, as he had done a dozen times before, why his wife was so infatuated with Will.

He sat some time lost in thought; then he went into the library, and ringing the bell, told a servant to send "Mr. William" to him as soon as he came in.

The man looked astonished. In that house Will had always been "Mr. Thorndale." Lord Kingsley had not long to wait; in half an hour or less Will strolled leisurely in.

"Have you seen Aunt Jessy? She will have a weight off her mind when she knows you are really here."

"Sit down, Will, I want to speak to you."

In a very few words he got out the story. Will did not interrupt him as his wife had done with questions, but sat motionless in blank despair.

"I suppose you are satisfied," he said, as the Marquis paused; "there is no doubt!"

"Not the shadow of one."

"It's very hard."

"Terribly!" and for a moment Lord Kingsley felt as if he had wronged his nephew; "but it must be faced. I for one can never forget how long I have looked on you as my heir. I will do my utmost to further your views in any profession you choose."

Will shook his head.

"I am too old for that. It would take three years or more to enter one."

"I suppose so. What are your views? You must have views."

"I feel too upset," said Will, slowly; "but there is only one thing I am fit for, to look after the land."

"You mean you would like to be a land agent?" thinking Will had never shown any talent for that calling.

"Yes. I should like to stay here and help you on the estate. Naturally, a large landowner wouldn't take a fellow as agent who had no experience. Let me stay here a year or so and get into training, then I can earn my bread; besides, Aunt Jessy will miss me dreadfully, and that will give her time to get used to the idea of our separation."

A long silence.

"If you stay here it must be on the distinct understanding you don't make love to Lady Viola."

Will shook his head proudly.

"If she wouldn't have me when I could make her a marchioness there's not much chance of her caring now."

"And have you thought at all of the petty trials you would have to face? This house must be Ronald's home, at any rate, for the present. It's not in human nature, Will, that you two should live peacefully under one roof."

"I haven't injured him," said Will, sulkily, "and I can trust myself. I suppose he's a country bumpkin, whom you'll have to make presentable before you introduce him to people. I may be able to lend a hand. He'll take a hint more

readily most likely from some one near his own age."

The Marquis could not believe his ears. Was it really Will speaking? How they had misjudged him!

"Of course yours is a generous offer," he said, frankly; "but I don't believe you realise the pain in store."

It was a miserably-constrained dinner. The presence of the butler and footman prevented the discussion of the subject in all their thoughts.

Lady Kingsley pointedly sent away each dish untouched, and never once addressed her husband. The Marquis looked troubled and ill at ease. The burden of the conversation rested mainly on Will, and he exerted himself hard to be agreeable, and save the position of affairs from becoming too apparent to the servant. It was a decided relief to him as well as to his uncle when Lady Kingsley swept from the room, the very picture of silent indignation.

"She takes it hard," said Lord Kingsley, with a groan.

"She'll get over it," said Will, bitterly, "and learn to welcome the rising sun. When do you expect him, by the way?"

"Ronald! He has not the slightest idea of his claims at present."

"Where is he? Selling cheese in the Borough, or quill driving in a city office?"

"Neither. He is secretary to your uncle, Mr. Grey."

"Did he 'discover' him?"

"Not in the sense you mean. Grey is abroad at present, and Ronald with him. I shall go over and break the news as soon as the shooting party is over."

"And bring back your new-found nephew?"

"Probably."

Will rose soon after and left the room. Lord Kingsley expected he had gone to exchange regrets with his aunt; instead the young man had thrown on a light overcoat and walked out at one of the long French windows which led on to the terrace. Calm as he had kept outwardly, his blood was boiling with indignation, and if his unknown cousin had been at his mercy just then he would not have spared him.

"It's cruel, monstrous," he cried, speaking aloud, almost unconsciously; "for years I've felt myself the future owner of this place, and all the Kingsley money, and now to be set aside for this upstart, whom no one ever heard of before. Oh, it's cruel, maddening."

He had turned into one of the shrubberies, and strode on impatiently, hardly knowing where he went. It was quite dark, for the sun sets early in the last days of August, and the moon was not yet up. It had been a lovely day, but towards sundown it turned wet, and now the rain descended in sheets; but William Thorndale headed nothing of the fury of the elements. The torrents of rain, the raging wind, was as nothing to the storm which burnt within him.

He considered that he had been despoiled of his birthright. He had kept his temper while talking to his uncle, and feigned a humility and resignation contrary to his whole nature; but here, alone in the darkness, his pent-up feelings found vent, and he dared to be himself.

"I hate him!" he cried, bitterly; "he has robbed me of my birthright, and I will be revenged on him if it takes long years, my whole life even. I will wreak my vengeance on this wretched mongrel, this child of a stolen marriage, who dares to come between me and my heritage. Ronald Thorndale, I hate you, and henceforth I have but one object in life, to avenge my wrongs and make you suffer as I do now!"

He paused, exhausted by rage and emotion. He leant for a moment against a wicket gate which led from the shubbery to the water's edge—for a beautiful alvery lake was the chief glory of the Abbey grounds. The storm had ceased, the wind had relaxed its fury; the rain no longer came down in such pitiless torrents; a strange, nameless instinct told William Thorndale that he was no longer alone. He peered vaguely into the darkness, but for a few moments could perceive nothing. Then a dark,

shadowy form seemed to rise up before him, and a cracked, discordant voice, muttered,—

"I hate him too!"

A shudder ran through Will's veins. He knew the voice, and was conscious now who stood near him, a fellowship he would gladly have been excused.

Upon Lord Kingsley's estate was one cottage, a reproach to its landlord, a blot on the beautiful order and prosperity which reigned around.

It was not the peer's fault, for he had offered scores of times to repair the miserable shanty, and had sent men on that errand more than once, only to be expelled by the tenant.

Years and years before, forty-five perhaps at the least, that cottage had been granted by the late Marquis to his children's nurse on her marriage with an undergardener. The man died of an accident within the year, and the shock so affected his poor wife that her child was born deformed—a hunchback.

The widow was a beautiful needlewoman, and aided by lavish help from the Abbey she managed to support herself and her afflicted child. Steven grew to manhood, and for his parents' sake he was employed on the Abbey lands. No one could do a better day's work than he; he was industrious, sober and energetic, but there was a crack in his temper, and he never forgave an injury.

He fell in love with a beautiful girl, who, without positively accepting him, played with his affections, till one fine day she vanished, and had never been seen in the village since. From that time Steven changed. He became morose and sullen. From the best workman in the village he grew idle and indifferent. The present Marquis, who had a real affection for his old nurse, promised her on her death-bed that he would never turn Steven out of the cottage, and sorely as the hunchback had tried his patience, the pledge had been kept.

This was the strange, misshapen creature who with a shout more like an animal's cry than a human voice seized hold of William Thorndale's hand.

"You hate him, Mr. Will, and so do I. Strange as such a fine pair as us can't ruin him. Your hand upon it, lad. Confusion and misery to Ronald Thorndale!"

(To be continued.)

WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?

—TO—

(Continued from page 417.)

"I will wait until the bird leaves her nest," she said to herself, sitting down in the grateful shade beneath the spreading branches, "and keep still, lest she should discover my presence."

How long she sat there she never afterwards remembered. The terrible stillness seemed to grow oppressive.

Something shone like twin scintillating diamonds among the wild flowers at her feet.

Slowly the flowers and the sparkling jewels seemed to wave to and fro—to and fro, impelling the girl to sway to and fro, keeping time with them.

The blood seemed to recede from her heart, leaving her as cold as ice. Her hands hung powerless at her side. She could not have moved a muscle, stirred hand or foot, if her very life had depended upon it.

Suddenly a shot close at hand rent the air, and Beatrice knew no more. When she returned to consciousness soon after she found herself lying by the side of a brook, while the handsome young man she had ever behold bathed her face with cool, life-giving water.

"You had a very narrow escape of it that time, young lady," he said, raising his straw hat from his fair, clustering curls with a low bow, as she sat up and looked at him in utter bewilderment.

"What is it?" she asked, wonderingly. "I was just falling asleep when I heard a shot. Did I faint?"

"Falling asleep," he echoed. "Well, I should say so. If I had not happened to come along just when I did you would have fallen asleep never to wake again on flowers, or snakes, or anything else. This is what came near doing the mischief. See;" and he held up before the girl's startled eyes a black snake fully ten feet long, minus the head, which had been shot off. "He had charmed you so completely that he was just about to strike," he added. "I shall always thank Heaven that I happened to be passing through the grove at that opportune moment."

The girl held out her slim white hand.

"I thank you from the depths of my heart," she said. "You have rendered me a great service."

He was loath to drop that little, soft, dimpled hand, but courtesy forbade him to hold it for more than a moment.

"Are you a stranger here, visiting friends?" he ventured.

"I am Beatrice Daly. I live with my aunt at Beech Grove Cottage," she answered.

"Ah, now that I look closely at you, I remember you, though I have not seen you since you were a little child. I am Donald Lindsay. My father publishes the weekly paper down in the village."

The girl was grievously disappointed. He was so handsome, so chivalrous, so winning, she thought he must be some noble lord or duke. And he was only the village editor's son! It was certainly too bad.

"Shall I accompany you as far as your home?" he asked, anxiously. "You look so white, I fear you have sustained a greater shock to your nerves than you are aware of."

"Oh, no—no, indeed," returned Beatrice, quickly. "My aunt does not like young men. I shall not mention what has transpired, and I beg that you will not, or I should never be permitted to go to the grove again, and it is my favourite resort these long, lonely afternoons."

"In that case, rely upon me for saying nothing about it."

"Thank you again, very much. Good-bye," she said, and again that soft little hand lay for an instant in his clasp, those glorious, dark starry eyes looked into his, and the mischief of a lifetime was done.

Donald Lindsay looked after the slim, supple figure like one in a dream, wondering if it were the same old world.

The girl hurried swiftly over the clover-meadows, with something very like a pout on her ripe red lips, murmuring discontentedly.—

"Why couldn't he have been a young lord or an earl, he is so handsome! I am sure I could have fallen in love with him if he had been."

More than once that evening Miss Daly noticed that her niece was unusually quiet.

"What are you thinking of, Beatrice?" she asked, abruptly.

The girl started, and a vivid flush overspread her lovely face. If she had answered truthfully she would have replied,—

"A fair, handsome face framed in curly light hair, a blonde moustache, and a pair of laughing blue eyes," but instead, she answered, "Nothing, aunt."

"You would be better employed in helping me darn stockings than standing at that open window gazing at the stars—star-dreaming."

"Star-dreaming is very pleasant, aunt," returned the young girl. "I would rather go out into the garden and watch the flowers go to sleep than mend stockings. I wonder," she added, suddenly, "if the man in the moon has fair, clustering hair, deep blue eyes, and a blonde moustache?"

"Nonsense," said the practical Miss Daly, with asperity. "You talk like a child of eight instead of a young girl of nearly eighteen. I am positively ashamed to hear you ask such a question."

During the fortnight that followed handsome Donald Lindsay fairly haunted the grove at the back of Beech Grove Cottage, and his patience was very often rewarded by seeing Beatrice and having a short conversation with her.

Each time he saw her he was more and more in

love with Miss Daly's niece, and he fancied, ay, he was quite sure, his love was returned; for surely when lovely eyes brighten, and the colour deepens at one's approach, and the hands tremble in one's clasp, it means that the heart has been stirred, he told himself.

In that hour no thought came to him of the storm-clouds that darken men's lives, of the terrible tempest that rends heart and brain, of the despair that looks for death as relief; he realised only that the world was full of sunshine, love, and beauty.

It was a pretty love story, this romance of Donald Lindsay and Beatrice Daly. Scarcely a day passed but he contrived in some way to see her, if but a few moments. If a day passed in which he did not meet her, that day was dark and gloomy, the sunshine was all blotted out for him.

We all know how quickly the hearts of people who are young and free from care respond to Cupid's call.

Days that were too pleasant to last glided by swift-winged; they enjoyed long hours together wandering in the shady nooks of the flowery dell, where only the murmuring brook heard what they said; they had stolen moments in the moonlight in the lilac-wall that led down to the gate.

Miss Daly detested the night air; she never went out into the grounds after the dew had fallen; she would not even sit in the porch, so Beatrice was allowed to roam through the old garden at will. Miss Daly never dreamed that behind the rose bushes there lurked a young and very handsome man.

To Donald Lindsay this pretty, bewitching girl was the very sun of his existence, the idol of his life. There were times when he trembled for himself at the strength of his great overpowering love. The worst part of it was he was a thousand times more in love with the pretty capricious beauty than she was with him.

She said to herself that it was very delightful to have such a handsome, devoted, adoring young lover. It was a thousand pities that he was not a noble lord or a duke, instead of—only the village editor's son, and poor at that.

"He will soon ask me to marry him," she told herself, "and what shall I answer him? If I say yes it will mean giving up all the dreams I have had of a castle, a whole retinue of liveried servants, coaches, horses, magnificent jewels, and shimmering silks and laces, such as Aunt Daly has been talking to me about ever since I can remember. Oh, dear, I wish she had not told me about them, then I would have been content to marry Donald, without the great longing for wealth and grandeur in my heart. I am sure Aunt Miranda Daly would never hear of my marrying him, because he is not a noble lord or a duke."

And this, dear reader, brings us back to the closing scene in our first chapter.

CHAPTER III.

MISS DALY drew a long breath as she watched the tall, stalwart figure of the handsome, disappointed young lover disappear over the hills.

"An enemy has stolen unaware into my camp," she whispered, hoarsely. "I forgot to be watchful. Great Heaven! how nearly the plans of years came to being undone! But it is not too late to repair the mischief, if any has been done. I will take Beatrice away at once. She shall not leave the house for a single hour, unless I accompany her, after to-day. To-morrow is the sixth of June. I shall have to go over to the post-office for the remittance, and within three days Beech Grove Cottage will be vacant."

The next morning Miss Daly went out to the barn, harnessed Kate, the old brown mare, to the rickety little cart, and was soon driving rapidly to the village, maturing her plans as she drove along.

So intent was she with her thoughts, she did not see the figure of a handsome young man lying at full length in the thick green grass under the shade of a wide-spreading tree.

It was Donald Lindsay. Unable to rest him-

self he had wandered out in the early morning and sat down beneath the first inviting tree to rest, and think out what had best be done. Miss Daly's sudden appearance flying along towards the village seemed an answer to his speculations.

In a flash the ardent young lover made his way to Beech Grove Cottage. Beatrice was sitting in the porch, looking as sweet as the beautiful June roses she had in her dimpled hands.

"Come into the garden, Beatrice; I have something to say to you," he urged. "I have something particular to say to you. I saw your aunt going to the village. She will be back directly. I must go before she returns."

"Ah! that explains why you are here. You saw my aunt drive away," laughed Beatrice. "My aunt left me that large basket to fill with strawberries," she said. "If I talk to you it will not be half filled, and I shall be called to account, and scolded dreadfully."

"I will fill the basket and talk to you at the same time. You shall sit down and fold those fly-leaves of hands and watch me. Ah, Beatrice," he murmured, as they walked along, "can you not guess what brings me here to-day? I fancy that every bird singing and drifting in the sun-shine knows it."

The young girl by his side laughed.

"Then they are wiser than I am," she observed.

"Beatrice!" he whispered, catching her hands and holding them so close that she could not draw them away from him, "I love you! Oh, my darling, will you be my wife?—mine—all mine, to love, to worship, to idolise, to reverence, to adore, while life lasts? What words shall I use, what shall I say to convey to you the power of my wonderful love! For the first time in my life I find words weak. Let me make my words a prayer to you. Marry me, Beatrice, for I cannot live without you—I cannot, indeed!"

The girl laid her cool soft white hand on the fair clustering curls of the eager, passionate young lover who knelt at her feet, his whole soul on his lips and in the eloquent gaze of the earnest blue eyes studying her face. He wondered why, in that moment, she said,—

"Oh! if you had but been a lord, or a duke, or an earl, Donald!"

"I am happier than any lord or duke or earl that ever walked the green earth, with you by my side, darling!" he cried, enthusiastically. "I could be as content in a cottage with you as in a palace with a queen for my bride. I love you so, Beatrice—ah, I love you so! I will make you so happy. I will give my life up to gratifying your every wish. I will be anything and everything you desire me to be."

"Everything except a lord," mused the girl, looking at him.

"That I could not well be, but every man is a nobleman if he but wins the respect and honour of his fellow-men by leading an upright life," he answered.

The girl looked at him thoughtfully. It was glorious to have a lover who idolised her as Donald did; still, she felt sure, in the great world outside there was a great prince waiting for her somewhere. Strangely enough, Miss Daly, who was so grim and so sensible in most things, had always fostered that strange, romantic notion—indeed, it was she who had first suggested such a future possibility.

"Say yes, Beatrice," pleaded the handsome young lover; "do not look at me in that calm fashion. Surely, Beatrice, the signs of love for me which I have read in your beautiful eyes were not false! Oh, beautiful statue, when will you wake to life? When will your heart and soul be stirred within you with a touch of the mighty love which burns my heart away? How shall I teach you? What can I do to make you love me?"

"I do love you, Donald," she said; but there was no girlish flush on her beautiful face, no love-light in her eyes.

A glad light broke over his fair, handsome, eager face.

"Oh! my darling, how I thank you for those words!" he cried. "They lift me from earth to Heaven; for those words make you my sweetheart. Those who love each other so are sweet-

hearts. But I want something more. I want you to be something nearer and dearer. Promise me that you will be my wife, Beatrice!"

"It is so much to promise—so much, Donald," she sighed. "Why are you not content to let matters rest as they are?"

"Because when a man loves—loves deeply, with all his heart and soul—the one great longing of his life merges into one thought, one hope, one grand dream which he longs to make a reality, and the fulfilment of all his hopes is when he stands at the altar with the girl he loves, listening to the words which make his sweetheart his darling wife. Ah, Beatrice, make my dream a reality—say that you will be my wife!"

His voice died away in a passionate murmur, and his lips grew white with emotion. He buried his face in the folds of her dress, and waited for her answer. He had made his plea, and was waiting for his sentence. Would it mean life or death for him?

His great passionate love had touched her. Again she laid her cool white hand on the fair bowed head.

"Perhaps it may be as you wish—some time, Donald," she murmured.

In an instant he had sprung to his feet, clasped her in his arms, and was raining down eager, passionate kisses on the lovely cheeks, the lovely lips, soft rings of curling hair, and dark, sweet eyes.

"You are my very own now, my darling!" he cried. "I defy anything in the whole wide world to part us. Ah, Beatrice, if you would but add to my happiness by marrying me at once—within the hour! Let us elope—your aunt will never give her consent, you know. We could go over to old Mr French, the registrar, be married at once, and take the train that leaves an hour later for the city. I have some money laid by. We could take a trip to wherever you would like to go. When we reach the city you could write to your aunt, telling her all. It would end by her forgiving us, and wishing us joy. Oh, darling, consent, I pray you!"

"Old Mr. French is very ill," said Beatrice. "I heard my aunt say yesterday that he would not last the week out."

"I am sure Heaven will spare him to unite us," declared the hopeful young lover. "He is familiar with the duty; it will be no effort for him to repeat it. Do come, Beatrice."

In that moment, listening to her eloquent young lover, Beatrice forgot the teaching of years—of the lords and dukes and earls Miss Daly talked of by night and by day; remembering only the young man kneeling at her feet who loved her so. She was young, and youth always lives in a world of romance of its own; and it would certainly be romantic to elope. The idea quite took her fancy.

"See, the sun is setting behind the lilac branches, Beatrice. Come, let us walk a little way and talk the matter over."

He took the lovely white hand in his and led her out of the old-fashioned garden, on the high-road, and together, in the gloaming, they walked over the carpet of beautiful wild flowers, little heeding whither their steps tanned.

Suddenly and quite by chance, as Beatrice imagined, they found themselves directly in front of the registrar's cottage.

"What do you say—shall we be married now? Oh, darling, do not refuse! See the old man observes us from the window, and is beckoning us to enter. We must go in."

Together they walked up the pebbled path and entered the open door.

"I am so thankful you two came along!" said Mr. French, feebly. "Pardon me for not rising to greet you. I am so very feeble, you know. My poor old wife went over to the village, and I am quite alone, with no companions save my one or two favourite authors, which I keep close at hand, and are always company."

Both Beatrice and Donald started as their eyes rested on a ritual, open at the marriage service.

"My good wife and I were married just fifty years ago to-day," he explained, seeing the direction of their gaze.

Donald Lindsay suddenly leaned forward.

"Would you kindly marry this young lady and myself, here and now, I have a special license!" he asked, earnestly, his clasp tightening on the girl's hand.

Beatrice had not promised to marry him, but he seemed to take it for granted.

Before she could utter a word the old man held out his hand and took both of their clasped ones.

"Certainly, if you both desire it," he replied.

As in a dream Beatrice heard him go through the prescribed form. In a feeble, faltering voice he repeated those mystic words which thrilled her heart with so keen, so new a sensation, she did not know whether it was joy or pain.

Finally the registrar pronounced them man and wife, charging them to cling to each other, to be faithful one to the other until death did them part. Then Donald kissed his young wife, calling her all manner of tender names, at which the old gentleman smiled and nodded, murmuring how blessed were youth and love—ay, better than all the kingdoms, all the wealth the world contained. Then, hand in hand, they went out into the gloaming.

"It is quite half an hour before the train leaves, my darling," said Donald, as they reached the junction of the road. "I will step over and buy two tickets, then come back and join you here, and we will stroll about until we hear the train coming. That will be time enough to step on the platform and meet the astonished gaze of the villagers. You will not be lonesome, for I shall be gone but a few minutes."

"I will stand right here in this spot, so that you may know where to find me, and I shall not be lonesome," declared Beatrice.

Donald kissed her passionately, straining her to his heart, as though he could not bear to be separated from her even for a moment; then at last he tore himself from her side and hurried towards the station.

He could not have been gone five minutes ere Beatrice, to her astonishment, heard the shriek of the approaching train.

"Surely Donald has been in error as to the time of its arrival," she told herself.

The next moment, panting and hissing like a huge thing of life, its fiery eye glaring ominously, the train dashed up to the station.

Beatrice heard a shout, a scream, a succession of wild, hoarse cries, and she saw from where she stood that there was great confusion on the station platform.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, the train had rushed on through the gloaming into the blackness of the coming night, still Donald Lindsay did not return.

The commotion around the railroad platform seemed to increase.

Fully half an hour passed and yet Donald Lindsay did not rejoin Beatrice, though she waited ever so patiently at the trying place.

CHAPTER IV.

To some people there is always a warning in the sudden depression of their spirits, a heaviness at their heart of coming danger which they cannot shake off.

So it was with Beatrice. A terrible fear crept over her as she waited at the trying place for the return of the handsome young man whom she had just wedded so romantically.

Five, ten, another twenty minutes passed, still he did not return from the station whence he had gone to purchase the tickets. Beatrice grew frightened at remaining so long alone, and after what had happened she dare not return to her aunt Miranda, whom she felt sure would shut the door in her face.

As she strained her eyes in the direction of the station she saw two dark figures approaching. As both forms appeared to be short and stout she knew that neither of them could be that of Donald Lindsay.

Beatrice drew back behind the friendly shelter of a wide-spreading bush, which she knew would entirely screen her from view until they should pass.

They were talking earnestly and excitedly, and quite by chance stopped to light a cigar directly in front of the bush which screened her.

"It was a terrible accident!" exclaimed the man who stood nearest her. "To the last day of my life I shall never forget that painful occurrence!"

"Tell me how it happened," said his companion. "Every one is so excited I could not find out just how it occurred, and who the young man was."

"Like yourself, I am a stranger hereabouts, and did not know him; still, I was an eye-witness, and can tell you about it. We were both at the booking-office window at the same time," he went on. "I had just purchased my ticket as he stepped up, calling for two tickets for Melton.

"How long before the train will be in?" he asked, as he received the tickets and the change.

"In about two minutes," was the answer.

"Great Heaven!" was the startled cry that fell from his lips, and like a flash he sprang away from the ticket-office and fairly leaped down the railway track toward this road.

"Great Heaven!" muttered the station master, "he can hardly hear the lines are the afternoon express will come along. He did not give me time to warn him."

As he spoke the express train whirled around the curve in the road, and like a thing of life sprang, leaping and panting, upon its prey. The young man stood directly in the path of the ponderous engine. The sight of it must have paralysed him for an instant, and in that fatal moment the terrible accident occurred. We saw him knocked down. The train was quickly brought to a standstill. The crowd that gathered around the poor fellow was so great that I could not see him, I could only hear what the doctors said. Luckily there were two of them on the train.

"Both of his limbs will have to be amputated. There is no way of saving them. Death would have been more acceptable than being a cripple all the rest of his life."

When the poor fellow heard that, his pitiful pleading to the doctors to kill him on the spot was heart-rending to hear.

"When they asked him if he had any one interested in him whom he wished to have advised of what had happened, for a moment he was silent, then he laid his handsome, death white face on the cold earth, and answered faintly,

"No."

"That was the last word he uttered, for at that instant the blessing of unconsciousness came over him. After a short consultation the doctors decided to take him to the city hospital, as the best place to have the operation performed.

"They say, even after that is done, it will be a miracle if he survives. Think of it, both limbs taken off, and he in the prime of life! I repeat, it would be a thousand times better if he were to die."

"At the station they say he is a single young man. It is a good thing that he has no wife. Hark! what is that?"

"The crashing down of some broken bough," answered his companion. "It is a common enough sound in the country."

They passed on. Behind the acacia bush, lying in the long, green grass, with her death-white face upturned to the moonlight, lay Beatrice, stricken as one dead.

The heavy dew, cool and fragrant, like pitying tears from heaven, fell upon her and soon revived her. Like one dazed, the girl sprang tremblingly to her feet and looked around her.

Was it a dream—some horrible dream from which she would soon awake? Then as she stood there, leaning heavily against the acacia bush, it all came back to her—the passionate wooing of her handsome young lover in the old rose-garden, the hasty marriage, and the elopement, which came to such a sudden and fatal ending with the terrible accident that had happened to Donald Lindsay, which would leave him the most pitiful of cripples for life, providing he lived through the amputation.

With a bitter cry she pressed her hands over her eyes to shut out the picture. The agony of each moment seemed endless. What should she

do? Ah, if she only knew what to do! Like a wounded bird which flutters back to its own nest to die, the girl turned her footstep toward Beech Grove Cottage. She had not gone far on the high road when she met her aunt.

"Is this indeed you?" cried Miss Daly; and to Beatrice's great surprise she did not scold her or inquire minutely as to where she had been and what had detained her. "I have been looking everywhere for you," went on her aunt, excitedly. "I have such wonderful news, so much to talk to you about! Come to the house quickly."

Beatrice's heart sank within her. Had Miss Daly heard all? She never afterwards remembered how she reached the cottage. She marvelled much at Miss Daly's exuberance. She never remembered to have seen her in such high spirits before.

She tried to tell her what she had done—that she had just wedded, and her young husband had met with a terrible accident which would result in his losing both of his limbs—that is, if his life were spared. But the words froze on her lips, leaving her speechless, stunned with fright. She had seen Miss Daly's anger aroused on one or two occasions, and it was so mighty, so tempestuous, so overwhelming, she never wanted to see another exhibition of it.

"Sit down here in the porch!" cried Miss Daly, excitedly. "I cannot wait until I get into the house to disclose to you the wonderful news."

Beatrice did as she was bidden; but Miss Daly did not notice that she fairly groped her way to the nearest chair, and sunk into it like one half fainting.

"You have always been aware that yours was no ordinary existence," pursued Miss Daly, with much animation. "I have taken great pains to instil into your mind from your earliest infancy. I have talked to you, read to you day by day of noble ladies. I have coached you continually regarding their mode of life. As to your own life, you have known but little. I have studiously declined to discuss it with you. You simply know that you were my niece, and that we received remittances of money twice a year, and on this we lived comfortably. I went to the post-office to receive the half yearly allowance this afternoon. It contained, beside the remittance a letter. The hour has now come in which I am compelled to disclose to you the wonderful story of your parentage, which is surely stranger than any tale of fiction that was ever told. Are you listening closely to me, Beatrice?"

The girl's lips moved, but no sound issued from them. Miss Daly did not wait for her answer, but continued:

"I am not your aunt, as you have been led all these years to believe. You were placed in my charge when but a few hours old, the circumstance which led to it being most peculiar. In order that you may fully understand the peculiar situation, I must begin with a narrative which it is of importance to first relate, as it has much to do with the story of your birth. In a beautiful spot in the west of England—I shall not mention the name of the place—there lived a few years ago a noble lord, Lord Edward Pelham—and his only son and heir, handsome Hubert.

"Next to the old lord's pride came his love for his only son. I use the sentence advisedly, for the stern old lord's intense pride was well known. His one great desire was to see his son married; but after careful observation he came to the conclusion that among the ladies of his acquaintance there was not one of them good enough for his heir. A princess of the royal blood it must be, or no one, he decided at length. It was then that the old lord saw the beautiful Princess Louise, and he said to himself: 'I have found, at last, the young lady whom I wish my son to wed.' Then and there the trouble began. He soon found out that, though handsome, laughing Hubert had always been so tractable in his hands before, when it came to marrying, the young man had a decided will of his own; and to add to his horror, he discovered that Hubert was not even heart-whole and fancy-free. He loved a poor barrister's daughter, and had already asked her to be his bride. There was a terrible scene,

The old earl declared that the barrister's daughter should never set foot in his palatial castle, which had been the ancestral home for generations back. He would lay it in ruins first. Nor should handsome Hubert inherit one farthing of his vast wealth.

"This threat did not influence young Hubert. 'I can live without your wealth, father,' he answered. 'I would rather have sweet Rosalind than all the wealth of the universe.'

"Then the old lord changed his tactics. He said no more to his son Hubert, but a few nights after, at a very late hour, the old lord's coach stopped in front of the humble barrister's door. The barrister received his distinguished visitor in wonder not unmixed with embarrassment. His amazement was great when he learned the nature of his visit. It was certainly news to him that his fair, timid, young daughter even knew the old lord's handsome son and heir.

"When Lord Pelham left the barrister who richer by some thousands of pounds; but the understanding was that he should take Rosalind far away ere the day dawned, and never return to England again, or, at least, not till handsome Hubert had forgotten his boyish romance, and was safely married to some one in his own station of life. So they settled the matter, quite forgetting the old proverb, 'Man proposes, but Heaven disposes.'

CHAPTER V.

"LORD EDWARD PELHAM's money had made the humble, struggling barrister a wealthy man. No wonder he had given his solemn promise that he would take his young daughter away at once, and that she should never have the opportunity of seeing the old lord's son again. Certainly he meant what he promised, but he should have remembered that 'there is a destiny which shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may.'

"Whether handsome Hubert guessed his father's intentions or learned of them from some other source no one knew; but when the barrister went to his daughter's room to bid her arise and accompany him on a sudden journey he found the room empty—the bird had flown. An open letter lying on the table, where his eye could not fail to rest upon it, told the story. Sweet Rosalind and handsome young Hubert had been married that day. She had gone away with her husband. Some day they would return; until then she bid her father a most affectionate adieu, begging him in the postscript not to be angry with her for not letting him know about it before, as she had but complied with her Hubert's earnest wish.

"He took the money back to Lord Pelham, but the irate old nobleman would not see him—he spurned the gold that had lain in the barrister's hands—he would not receive it back. He was surprised to find that the barrister's pride was equal to his own. He had left the envelope containing the bank-notes, still unopened, upon the library-table, and walked out of the grand old castle, leaving behind what was to him a fortune. The old nobleman could not help but admire the barrister for this show of spirit. As for handsome Hubert and his bride, all that could be learned of them was that they had left England. One of the servants of Lord Pelham's household, Mary Seymour, had accompanied them as Rosalind's maid.

"Now comes the part of the narrative which concerns you, Beatrice. Follow me closely, my dear. Do not interrupt me with questions, even though they are of great interest.

"After travelling about for nearly a year, Hubert, his young wife, and the maid, returned to England as suddenly as they had left it, Hubert's great desire being that the heir he was expecting should be born as near his father's estate as possible. It seemed to bring new life to the delicate young wife to see the old familiar scenes once more. Even Mary was delighted, and when she asked permission to go and visit her parents for a few weeks, although her services were greatly needed, Rosalind could not refuse her request, especially as she had faithfully

promised that she would return any time she was sent for, as her parents lived only a few hours' ride distant.

"But Mary Seymour did not go home to her parents; her heart was too bitter for that; instead, she went to a farm-house in which an old doctor lived—a doctor too old to follow his profession. He owned the little farm, and had retired thither to end his days.

"Who shall say that the ways of fate are not most wonderful and strangely cruel to some lives?

"One evening at dusk, as Doctor Heath sat smoking in his porch, he witnessed on the main road, a few yards distant, a runaway horse. The carriage contained but two persons, a lady and a gentleman; both were thrown out ere he could reach them. The accident had caused instant death to the gentleman. Then he bent quickly over the prostrate form of the lady. She was alive, but unconscious. He lifted the slight form with a cry of intense pity, and bore her as quickly as possible to the house.

"Mary Seymour had seen it all from the window, and came rushing towards him trembling with terror.

"It is my lady!" she cried, hysterically, wringing her hands. 'She will die, and the shock of it will kill me, too!'

"You are this lady's maid!" exclaimed the old doctor, sternly, and in great amazement. 'Then you spoke falsely when you told me you were the wife of a respectable architect, who had sent you to me for a few weeks.'

"Oh, sir, do not reproach me now!" moaned the girl. 'It is too late—too late! In Heaven's name, show me compassion!'

"Dusk soon settled into the darkness of night, and ere the stars in the blue sky overhead were visible for an hour two little ones had opened their infantile eyes upon a world which was to hold so much woe for them. It would have been better for the babes had they died then and there.

"The aged doctor had been put to his wife's end at this unexpected occurrence, which he was called upon to face all by himself, every member of his family having gone to attend an affair of some importance at the adjacent village, leaving him alone with the boarder, who was there awaiting his service.

"The conditions of his patients being so critical the doctor was obliged to place them both in one room, and the two babes were laid side by side. When Mary Seymour called for her little one the good old doctor was sorely puzzled.

"'Heaven help me!' he ejaculated. 'Were it to save my life I could not tell one from the other! Both girls! Good Heavens, this is indeed a terrible state of affairs!'

"The woman did not again ask for her child. She turned her face to the wall, muttering some words he could not understand.

"The other fair-haired young mother's lips were dumb. Never more in this world would those blue eyes open again. She had silently passed away, leaving her babe as a pitiful legacy behind her.

"As soon as he could safely leave the room the old doctor rode hurriedly to the nearest farm for assistance. He also sent a despatch to Lord Pelham to come in all haste to Willow Farm.

"When he returned home he found, to his great astonishment, the woman Mary Seymour missing. Immediate search led to the finding of foot-prints, which were traced down to the old well, and stopped there.

"'If she is down there,' muttered the doctor, 'it is useless to make further search. The old well is bottomless.'

"No foot-prints could be traced in the long grass which grew beyond the old well.

"Lord Pelham answered the summons by coming in all haste. Then and there the pride of a life-time broke down. He mourned, and refused to be comforted.

"When his grief had partially subsided he called for his son's child; and when the trembling old doctor told him of the two babes, and that he did not know which one was the old lord's heiress, Lord Pelham's anger knew no bounds. He paced the floor like a madman,

heaping the bitterest of curses upon the bowed head of the sorrowful old doctor.

"Lord Pelham sent his advisers in great haste, and even they, when they heard what he had to tell them, looked grave and shook their heads.

"'To decide which child is your son's heiress, and therefore your heiress as well, is a grave and difficult matter,' they all agreed.

"No one would dare offer to suggest which was which, lest he should, by fatal chance, select the wrong babe, thus robbing the rightful heiress of her birthright.

"'Heaven show me a way out of this!' groaned the old lord, pacing the floor in the greatest excitement. 'Was there ever such a state of things!'

"'I have something to suggest,' said one of the oldest and wisest of his counsellors. 'Take both children, give each to a different governess—women of great refinement—let them be brought up without a knowledge of their birth until you choose to divulge it to them, and when they are grown up to girlhood you should be able, my lord, to easily discern which of the two young girls has the proud Pelham blood in her veins, and which is the daughter of Mary Seymour. Rest assured, blood will tell, my lord,—blood will tell.'

"Lord Pelham grasped his hand.

"'Your advice is excellent,' he said, huskily. 'I accept it. It is the only way out of the difficulty. My granddaughter must not be cheated out of her birthright. Your plan is the only safe way out of this entanglement. Heaven grant that no mistake will be the outcome of this in the future. My heart feels very heavy over it.'

"Thus the matter was settled. Another governess and I were selected to undertake the charge. You were given to my charge. Hester, as the other child was called, was given into the keeping of Miss Bray. We were both sent to different parts of the country with our charges, but neither knew the other had been sent.

"The recent death of Miss Bray had made it necessary for the old lord to decide at last the momentous question of the two young girls' lives, especially as you are both almost eighteen.

"Lord Pelham is to decide which of you two is his heiress. Heaven grant that his choice may fall upon you, Beatrice! You are so beautiful, so spirited, so thoroughly the aristocrat in every action, tone and look, that deep down in my heart I feel sure you must be the rightful heiress.

"I have brought you up with that idea ever before you. You would grace a throne, beautiful Beatrice. If you are indeed what I truly believe you to be, you will be one of the greatest heiresses in England, and my dream for you will be realized. You will yet marry a nobleman. You will have castles and jewels, an army of servants—everything your heart desires. But even in the midst of all that luxury you would not forget Miranda Daly, would you, my dear, nor blame me that I brought you up so strictly, guarding you so zealously against love and lovers? I knew why, my dear child—you see I knew why.

"You and Hester Bray are to live under the same roof with the old lord until he has the opportunity of judging you both carefully at his leisure. We are to start for the country mansion to-day. Why, Beatrice, child! you are as white as death! Are you ill?"

(To be continued.)

IN most tropical countries sudden darkness after sundown is one of the peculiarities. In Egypt, at certain seasons of the year, the sun goes down and darkness comes on very suddenly, continuing for a space of twenty minutes or half-an-hour. Then, all of a sudden, the hills and sands take on a ghastly paleness, and in another moment everything begins to brighten, and it appears as if the sun is about to rise out of the west.

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A TIMELY GIFT.

—:-

"We must try to keep Christmas Day after a fashion," sighed Mrs. Forder to her daughter Lina; "though, to-be-sure, two poor chickens and a pie won't be much of a dinner."

"How different it used to be in the country, where we used to kill the fattest gobbler in the flock for our Christmas dinner, and made plenty of pudding and mincemeat! But, law! it's different in the city—that is, if you ain't made of money! The markets are lined with turkeys an' fowls of all kind, an' vegetables on the waggon-load; but it takes a forchin' to get 'em a'most. I give six-and-six for chickens; I did want to git a few other things, but Tom had set his heart on havin' a pudding, so I made one."

Mrs. Forder shook her head as she turned over the contents of the little worn market-basket on the kitchen table.

"Oh, we can make quite a nice dinner of these," said Lina, lifting up the chickens; "and I have a few shillings left. We can buy a dish of jelly with it. I walked home to-night, and saved it on purpose."

"But it won't seem quite like a Christmas dinner unless we have some one to help us eat it," persisted Mrs. Forder. "I've always been used to havin' the house full on Christmas Day, an' it don't seem right to set down an' eat what we've got all by ourselves."

"There's old Mr. Brown, that lives up in the third story," suggested Lina. "He's as poor as we are, if not poorer. Suppose we ask him to have dinner with us!"

"Why, to be sure," said her mother, brightening up. "I'll send Tom up to ask him as soon as he comes in."

The Forders occupied two rooms in the back part of a respectable house in a good square.

The rooms were small, and not very comfortable, to be sure, but they were good and cheap, and poor as they were it took about all Lina could earn to pay the rent and buy food, fuel and clothing for herself, her mother, and eight-year-old Tom, who went to school, and wore out more jackets and trousers than he was worth, so his mother declared.

Tom soon came in, when he was at once despatched to invite old Mr. Brown to the Christmas dinner the next day.

Mrs. Forder was setting the table for supper, and Lina was cutting the loaf of bread, when he came running back.

"All right, mother! Mr. Bastick says he'll come."

"Mr. Bastick!" cried Lina.

"Mr. Bastick!" shrieked the widow. "Oh, Tom, you never asked him!"

"Yes, I did," declared Tom, boldly. "Why, you told me to ask him!"

"I said Mr. Brown, you dreadful boy! And now, what are we going to do?"

Lina began to cry.

"Two little chickens, as big as partridges, and a few miserable turnips and a pudding. Oh, Tom, Tom! what made you do such a thing?"

"Well, shall I go back and tell him not to come?" asked the boy, practically.

"No, no—of course not!" cried his sister, drying her tears and beginning to laugh at the ridiculous side of the affair. "We must make the best of it now, of course; but what will he think of us! I can stuff these miserable little fowls with some stale bread-crumb," she added, as her mother looked hopelessly on. "And we must polish up the bits of silver and 'put the best foot foremost'; but it will be a ridiculous Christmas dinner, after all."

Mr. Leonard Bastick was a bachelor, well-to-do, and good-looking, Lina admitted, who occupied the second story front room in Mrs. Campbell's house, and took his meals out.

Mr. Bastick had frequently bowed to Mrs. Forder, as they met in the halls or on the staircase, and had even exchanged a few words with Lina; and once he had brought her home under his umbrella during a heavy rain.

But what would he think of them for inviting

him to a Christmas dinner!—and such a dinner, too!

Lina lay awake half the night puzzling her head over this problem.

The sun shone out on a clear, frosty Christmas morning, and Lina and her mother were bustling about putting the little rooms in holiday order, when shuffling steps came up the stairway, a thumping knock sounded on the door, and a shock-headed boy asked,—

"Mrs. Forder lives here?"

"Yes," said the widow, wondering. "That's my name."

"This here's for you, then. Nothin' to pay."

And having deposited a well-filled hamper on the table the boy shuffled away, leaving the widow and her daughter staring at each other with astonishment.

"It's a mistake!" cried Lina.

But no, there was a card with Mrs. Forder's name and number, carefully attached to the hamper; and having made sure it was meant for them, Lina fell at once to rinsing it of its contents.

"A fifteen-pound turkey, I do believe! Just look, ma! and no end of grocery! A paper of sugar. Eggs—two dozen of 'em at least—and sweet potatoes. Half-a-dozen lemons, and raisins, and currants and citron, and ginger. What else, I wonder?"

Lina and her mother stared blankly at each other, while Tom helped himself to currants and raisins unrebuked.

"I should think 'twas sister Jenny sent 'em," said Mrs. Forder, at last.

"It's a godsend to us, anyway, wherever it came from," declared Lina. "And I'm going to get dinner at once. And now we can ask old Mr. Brown, too, after all."

The turkey was soon roasting in front of a fine fire, and the odour filled the little kitchen and floated out through the hallway, penetrating even to Bachelor Bastick's very door.

The dinner was a success. The soup, roast turkey, the potatoes, the piss and cranberry sauce were cooked to perfection, and Mr. Bastick could not help contrasting his lonely dinners at the restaurant with this cosy meal; with kind-hearted Mrs. Forder presiding over the coffee-urn, and pretty, violet-eyed Lina busy helping everybody but herself.

Old Mr. Brown, too, with his dignified manners, was no detriment to the merry party around the well-spread board. And when it was over, and Mr. Bastick had gone to smoke a cigar in the solitude of his own room, he mentally decided, as the blue wreaths curled overhead, that "it was not good for man to be alone."

In fact, before many moons had come and gone, pretty Lina Forder had resigned her situation and assumed the more responsible position of housewife, with the matronly title of Mrs. Bastick.

And not until then did Mr. Bastick confess that he had sent the hamper which had so puzzled Lina and her mother.

"I overheard your conversation when you discovered Tom's blunder," he confessed, "and of course, on learning the circumstances, I thought it was only my duty to help you out of the dilemma."

And Lina only laughed at her husband's explanation, and declared she had suspected him all along.

But a load was lifted from Mrs. Forder's mind, for, according to her own confession, "she couldn't scarcely sleep o' nights for wondering where on earth that hamper came from."

BIGAMISTS in Hungary are compelled to submit to an odd punishment. The man who has been silly enough to marry two wives is legally forced to live with both of them, in the same house.

INDIGESTION, Constipation, Sick Headache, &c. Tonic "Doctor," a specific from the formula of a Dr. of Med., as Specialist for Dyspepsia; cures the most obstinate cases. Pamphlet, with Analytical Certificates free. Bottles, 5s., from O. E. HORN, D.Sc., Bournemouth (Awarded Gold Medal, Paris).

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"By a thorough knowledge of the natural laws which govern the operations of digestion and nutrition, and by a careful application of the fine properties of well-selected Cocoa, Mr. Epps has provided for our breakfast and supper a delicately flavoured beverage which may save us many heavy doctors' bills. It is by the judicious use of such articles of diet that a constitution may be gradually built up until strong enough to resist every tendency to disease. We may escape many a fatal shaft by keeping ourselves well fortified with pure blood and a properly nourished frame."—*Civil Service Gazette*.
Made simply with boiling water or milk. Sold only in packets and 2 lb. tins, by Grocers, labelled thus:—

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Makers of Epps's Cocoa or Cocoa Nib Extract:—A thin beverage of full flavour, with many beneficially taking the place of tea.

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Are twice as efficacious as any others, and always quickly and certainly relieve. Greatly superior to Steel and Pennyroyal. Invaluable to women. Post free for 1d and 3d stamps from **THOMAS OTTEY, CHEMIST, BURTON-ON-TRENT.** Please mention paper.

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For Heading Note-paper, Marking Linen, Creases, Fossiliæ, and all Business Purposes. Monograms.—Two-Letter, 1s. Three-Letter, 1s. 6d. Your name in full, 1s. 4d. Postage, 3d. extra. This price includes Stamp, mounted on Brass complete, with Box, Pad, and Ink. Price Lists of all kinds free.

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ONE BOX OF DR. MACKENZIE'S IMPROVED HARMLESS COMPLEXION WAFERS will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire; clear, fresh, free from blotch, blemish, coarseness, redness, freckles, or pimples. Post-free for 1s. 6d.; half-boxes, 2s. 6d. London Bridge, S.W. H. HARVEY, 5, Denmark Street, London Bridge, S.W.

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May walk perfectly straight and with the greatest ease by wearing PINET'S LOUIS BOOTS. No hideous boots or unsightly irons. Write for pamphlet.—L. R. PINET, Boot and Shoe Bureau, 56, Barnet's Street, Oxford Street, London.

TO LADIES.

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE.

An interesting little COPYRIGHT TREATISE, which should be carefully read by every English Wife. Sent FREE on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.—Apply M.D., 217, Graham Road, London, N.E. Please name this paper.

FACETIE.

MR. NEUWED (on Boxing Day): "What's the matter with these cigars?" Mrs. Neuwed: "Why, dear, they smelt so horrid that I put some cologne on them."

"I HAVE told you again and again, Fannie, not to speak when older persons were talking, but to wait until they stop." "I've tried that already, mamma. They never stop."

"I SHOULD like to write for your paper. You want the manuscript sheets blank on one side, don't you?" Managing Editor: "On both sides, if you please."

SHE: "Whom would you rather be if you were not yourself?" He: "You." She: "Why?" He: "Because I'd know I could have me if I wanted me."

DINGLE: "A girl who can sing just as soon as she gets up in the morning must have a sweet disposition." Toots: "Not necessarily. She may have a grudge against somebody in the neighbourhood."

JIMKINS: "Why do you look so gloomy, Tomkins?" Tomkins: "You know my best girl is one of those New Women! Well, I'm puzzled to decide whether I ought to ask her to marry me or wait for her to propose."

A CURIOUS note of explanation accompanied some poetry received by an editor. The note ran thus: "These lines were written fifty years ago by a man who has, for a long time, slept in his grave merely for pastime."

JONES had been quite ill. One day the doctor called and found him in a bath-tub. "Why, man, are you crazy? You must be anxious to die!" "No, I ain't," protested poor Jones; "but didn't you say that your last medicine was to be taken in water?"

"Of course I don't expect to get a seat," said the large lady, who was hanging to the strap. "And I don't think I ought to have one either. It ain't right when a man has spent the last penny he's got for a ride to make him stand up; indeed it ain't." Several men arose, each jingling some silver in his pocket, as if to resent the imputation.

THEIR WERE OTHERS—"Am I the only woman you ever loved?" "Oh, no," he answered, promptly; "you are the sixth." "The sixth!" she exclaimed, suddenly, relieving his shoulder of the weight of her head. "Yes," he said, coldly, "there were five before you—my mother, an aunt, and three sisters." And thereafter she endeavoured to be more specific when she asked questions.

MOTHER: "Clara, I don't like that young Mr. Huggard coming here so often." Clara (who likes Huggard, but wishes to give her mother a different opinion): "Yes; I am always glad when the time comes for him to go." Clara's Brother: "Yes; and I know why, too." Clara (sharply): "And why, Mr. Clever?" Clara's Brother: "Because he always kisses you at the front door when he goes."

MRS. GADD: "Oh, Mr. Shirl, stop a moment; I want to speak to you. Have you been home since morning?" Mr. Shirl: "No." "Heard anything?" "Why, no. What do you mean?" "Oh, I can't be the first to tell it; indeed I can't. The neighbours are sayin' that your wife and Mr. Hanson has eloped." "Well, well! It's his own fault. I warned him to keep away from her."

A FARMER was in the habit of selling his butter to an old woman who kept the village shop, and who supplied him with candles. He thought, however, for several weeks that his candles were short in weight, and told the old woman of it. "Mebbe they are, lad; mebbe they're not. Anyhow, I allus uses a pound of your butter as a weight when I puts 'em up." The farmer concluded the weight was satisfactory.

AN IRISH soldier, placed on guard over a cannon, was found in a public-house some distance off by his officer. "How dare you leave your post?" was the stern rebuke. "Ah, but it's no consequence at all, at all, place your honour," said the man. "There's no two men, yer honour, would fit the gun between them, much less carry it off. An' if there was more than two, I know I wouldn't be a match for them; so I kem away, yer honour!"

"THERE'S nothing like advertising," said the prosperous linen-draper, solemnly. "You're right there," nodded the tea-merchant with a snug balance at his banker's, who sat next to him. "I couldn't get on without it." "Now, my wife, for instance, went on the linen-draper," had a queer experience the other day. She had lost a lace handkerchief—a heirloom—very valuable. She put an advertisement in the morning paper, and the very next day—"She found it in a drawer of her dressing-table."

DANGLE: "Our servant lighted the fire with paraffin the other morning." Potts: "Did you discharge her?" Dangle: "We haven't found her yet."

IT was a hot Sunday afternoon, and during the sermon a man in a smock-frock, sitting in the gallery over the clock, every now and then leaned over to see the time. After some time the irritated preacher could stand it no longer, and addressing himself to the gallery, he exclaimed, "I beg to inform that man who continues to look at the clock that it is twenty-three minutes past four, and I shall have done my dreary sermon in a minute or two." "If you please, sir," came the unexpected answer from the gallery. "I warn't a bit tired o' your sermon, but the cows maun be milked."

"PHILANDER," said a pretty girl to her bashful beau, "I wish you'd tie this ribbon at my throat; I can't see to do it without a glass." "Of course; I'll be too glad too," he said, and at once grappled the strings. After an unsuccessful effort of five minutes, during which he got as red as a brick house, and perspired like a pitcher of ice water on a July window-sill, he stammered: "I—I—don't think I can tie a respectable knot, Miss Mary." "Suppose, Philander," she whispered, with a pretty little blush, "suppose you call in a clergyman to assist?" Like the unveiling of a beautiful mystery the situation unfolded itself to Philander, and he feels better now.

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FOR CHAFED SKIN, PILES, CHAPPED HANDS, CHILBLAINS, SORE EYES,
THROAT COLDS, EARACHE, NEURALGIC AND RHEUMATIC PAINS,
INSECT BITES, SCALDS, CUTS, BRUISES, RINGWORM, AND
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CARBOLIC OINTMENT

Large Pots, 1s. 1½d. each, at Chemists, &c., or Post Free for value.

W. VAUGHAN, Esq., Capel, Surrey, says:—"I find that your Carbolic Ointment is a sovereign remedy for Chilblains. It at once relieves the sore and irritating pain, and a few applications complete the cure."

From W. J. WARE, Esq., Nunhead, London.—"Having a very sensitive skin, much affected by cold winds, it made me a victim to great suffering, although having tried numerous remedies. A friend insisted on my trying your Carbolic Ointment, and gave me proof of its efficacy. I applied it also for a very bad burn on my hand, which, after a few applications, it entirely relieved; and, having used it beneficially for other purposes, I can only describe it as a Miraculous Ointment."

W. C. FITZGERALD, Chemist, Wellington, New Zealand, writes: "It is, without exception, the best healing Ointment I ever used."

F. C. CALVERT & Co., Manchester.

AWARDED 76 GOLD & SILVER MEDALS & DIPLOMAS.

SULPHOLINE
A SPOTLESS SKIN.
A BEAUTIFUL COMPLEXION.
ERUPTIONS, PIMPLES
ENTIRELY FADE AWAY.

PEPPER'S TONIC
Promotes Appetite.
CURES DYSPEPSIA, HYSTERIA, NERVOUS COMPLAINTS.
SHILLING BOTTLES.

SOCIETY.

It is probable that the Prince and Princess of Wales and Princess Victoria will go early in March to Copenhagen for a month, on a visit to Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark.

The only living person who has written opera librettos in four languages is the Queen of Roumania. She has produced librettos in French, German, Swedish, and Roumanian.

The Queen returns to Windsor Castle for a stop of three weeks before going to the Riviera. As the two early Drawing Rooms are to be held by the Princess of Wales Her Majesty will not visit London before the first week in May.

The Queen's private telegraph office at Osborne has just been converted into a postal sub-office for the convenience of residents in the Palace. The office, which is under Cawes, is in charge of the Court telegraphist, and will be open only during the Queen's residence at Osborne.

The Archduchess Stephanie, widow of the Crown Prince Rudolph, will in future act as representative of the Empress Elizabeth at the Court of Vienna, and an official notification of this arrangement is to be issued in a few days. During the last eight years the Empress has been represented at Court functions by the Archduchess Maria Theresa, the wife of the late Archduke Charles Louis.

The programme for the festivities on the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee will probably be decided upon before Her Majesty leaves England in March. The fatiguing settlement of details will be taken off Her Majesty's hands by the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Connaught, who will share the responsibilities and anxieties of deciding what representatives of foreign countries shall be invited to England, and all the thousand and one minutiae of the Court arrangements.

The Emperor William is anxious to arrange for the betrothal of his sister-in-law, Princess Féodora of Schleswig-Holstein, youngest sister of the Duke of Augustenberg, to Prince Max of Baden, nephew and presumptive heir of the Grand Duke of Baden. Prince Max is a great-grandson of the Emperor Nicholas, his mother, Princess William of Baden, being a daughter of the late Duke of Leuchtenburg and the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia. Princess Féodora is residing at Dresden with her mother, the Duchess of Augustenberg (Princess Adelaide of Hohenlohe-Langenburg), but is expected at Baden on a visit to the Emperor and Empress.

The whole of the west wing of the new hotel at Cimiez has been taken by the Queen for March and April, there being over a hundred and forty rooms. There are glorious views of both sea and land from the windows, and outside the Queen's apartments there is a wide balcony, where breakfast will be served on fine mornings under an awning. The Queen's rooms are on the first floor, while the second floor will be appropriated to Princess Beatrice and her children, and the suite and servants are to be on the third floor. Lady Southampton, who will be in waiting, has rooms near those of the Queen. Special arrangements will be made for the Indian domestics. The hotel contains more than five hundred rooms, and it is five stories high, with a frontage to the sea of six hundred feet. The first floors have been sumptuously decorated, and nearly all the furniture is being bought in London, except the Queen's bed, easy chair, and footstool, and a few other articles, which will be sent from Windsor with the plate, linen, glass, and china. There is a lift from the corridor outside the Queen's apartments, which runs down to the entrance-hall. Another lift has been made to work between the hotel and the Anglican church, which is just below, so that if the Queen wishes to attend service there she will have no steps to encounter. The royal apartments include a vast reception saloon, decorated in white and gold; a large dining-room, richly furnished in red velvet on Elizabethan lines; and a Louis-Seize drawing-room, in blue silk, with a fawn carpet.

STATISTICS.

OVER 1,250,000 acres of the earth's surface are devoted to the cultivation of tobacco.

It is said that the Greenland whale sometimes attains the age of 400 years.

The music-halls of London regularly employ over 12,000 people.

The railways of the United Kingdom possess nearly 20,000 locomotives.

The song of the nightingale can be heard at the distance of a mile.

The total shipments of gold from Australia since August last amount to £1,775,000 in value.

A FIFTEEN-POUND codfish, recently examined, was found to have a roe containing 4,822,000 eggs.

GEMS.

TRYING to be happy is like trying to go to sleep. You will not succeed unless you forget you are trying.

It whose business it is to till the ground or to cleanse a building may cherish exactly the same aim as the statesman or the philanthropist—that is, service to others.

We have to be faithful in small things as well as in great. We are required to make as good use of our one talent as of the many talents that have been conferred upon us. We can be honest, truthful, diligent, were it only out of respect for one's self. Character is made up of small duties faithfully performed.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

EGG BALLS.—Rub the yolks of two hard boiled eggs through a sieve. Season with one-eighth teaspoonful salt, a few grains cayenne, and one-half teaspoonful melted butter. Moisten with a small amount of raw egg yolk to make of consistency to handle. Shape in small balls about half the size of a nutmeg. Poach in hot water or roll in flour, and sauté in butter.

CHOCOLATE PUDDING.—Beat one egg, a half-cupful of sugar, a tablespoonful of butter and a teaspoonful of cocoa together until very light. Then add a small half-cupful of milk and a large cupful of flour in which has been sifted a teaspoonful of baking powder. Beat well and bake in a square pan half an hour. Serve with sauce. The quantity may be doubled and a portion used for the pudding and the rest baked in gem pans.

PINEAPPLE CREAM.—Put one cupful of sugar, a third of a cupful of water, a saltspoonful of cream of tartar, and a piece of butter the size of an egg into a saucepan, and let it stand upon a stove with a moderate steady heat. It wants to boil fifteen minutes; do not stir while cooking, but cream it thoroughly when taken from the fire, flavouring it at the same time with extract of pineapple. Roll into a thin sheet, or pull into flat, thin sticks.

ROLLED RABBIT AND ONION SAUCE.—Soak the rabbit in salt and water for a quarter of an hour, then wash and dry it. It should be trussed into shape, or else cut up into joints; put it into boiling water to boil gently from half an hour to one hour, according to age and size. While it is boiling make the sauce—one small Spanish onion, one dessertspoonful of butter, one small tablespoonful of flour, some pepper and salt, and one breakfast cupful between the liquor the rabbit is boiling in and milk; cut the onion up in four pieces, and put it into a pan with salted water to boil till tender, then drain it and chop it up; put the butter and flour in a pan, and mix over the fire, then put in all the liquid, and stir till it boils, then the onion and the seasoning; when boiling pour it all over the rabbit on a nice dish.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PRINCE FRANCIS JOSEPH of Battenberg and his sister, the Countess von Erbach-Schöberg, are on a visit to the Queen for a month.

THE greatest of all luxuries in Central Africa is salt. The long-continued use of vegetable food in that country creates so painful a longing for salt that natives deprived of it for a long period often show symptoms of insanity.

A NAVAL captain has invented a new lifebuoy. It consists of a large cork ring, capable of floating three persons, and provided with a kind of net, which affords a support to the feet. Its principal feature, however, is that it is fitted with an electric-light and a small supply of provisions.

THE palace of the King of Siam is inclosed in high white walls which are a mile in circumference. Within them are contained temples, public offices, seraglios, stables for the sacred elephant, accommodation for 1,000 troops, cavalry, artillery, war elephants, an arsenal, and a theatre.

IN the Colorado desert they have rainstorms during which not a single drop of water touches the earth. The rain can be seen falling from the clouds high above the desert; but when the water reaches the strata of high, dry air beneath the clouds it is entirely absorbed before falling half the distance to the ground.

ONE of the so-called lost arts was the preparation of sculpture by what was known as a wax process. It was considered of very great value, and numberless efforts have been made to get at the fashion of preparing gelatine so that it will resist the action of heated wax. A Rhode Island artist has rediscovered the secret, and is working it successfully. By this means wax models are obtained which are hollow and very light. They are exact reproductions of the original, and can be finished in any way that the artist pleases.

IN a certain sense elephants are still used in battle by Indian troops, but they are only used as beasts of burden and draught for artillery; but in ancient times they were used in the East as fighting animals, and taught to swing chains and bars of metal in their trunks. There is, however, every probability that the last campaign in which they were regularly used in this capacity was that of the year 1601, in which the great Akbar subdued the native kingdoms of the Deccan and established the Mohammedan power in India.

IN Norway, Sweden, and Finland women are frequently employed as sailors, and do their work excellently; and in Denmark several women are employed afloat as State officials, generally in the pilot service. They go far out to sea in their boats to meet the vessels coming into port, and, having nimbly climbed on board and shown their official diploma, they calmly and coolly steer the new-comer into harbour. It is just the same in Finland. On board small sailing vessels the stewardess and the skipper's wife share in the ordinary task of the sailor, even taking their turns at the wheel and the watch during the night. Experienced captains say that women make excellent mariners, and have as much dexterity and endurance as most men.

SOME interesting scientific facts have been gleaned during the Nansen expedition. During the earlier part of the cruise the sailors had some rather lively experiences with bears and other animals. North of 84°, however, they found no signs of animal life. The theory has been held that if one penetrated sufficiently far he would come to dry land and an open sea. This theory was based on the fact that birds have often been seen flying directly north. It is supposed that these birds may have been thrown out of their course, and became confused by the heavy winds of that locality. Another interesting discovery is that, instead of land, the depth of the water is greatly increased and the variations in the sea temperature were remarkable. The lead reached the depth of over 3,000 fathoms.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B. B.—December 26th is a Bank Holiday.

CHRISTINA.—The maiden name should be given.

T. E.—The first letter opened should have priority.

GROSVENOR.—The "s" in Grosvenor is not sounded.

NORBLUM.—Only "Lord George," so far as we know.

DESPAIR.—You cannot legally marry again without obtaining a divorce.

MENTOR.—That is malicious conduct, and lays you open liability in damages to the man.

CHATTERTON.—You can be turned out without compensation by a week's notice.

POGGIE.—The value of what it will fetch; ask some dealer to make an offer.

SENOR.—Senor, Spanish, corresponds to the English Mr. or Sir; Senora to Mademoiselle or Mrs.

A MISERABLE WOMAN.—A divorced woman resumes the name by which she was known before marriage.

E. K.—You are legally married, and are entitled to retain the name by which you were always known.

MOLLIE.—The salt is not correct, and would have the opposite effect from that you desire.

TWENTIETH CENTURY.—The nineteenth century ends on 31st December, 1900.

A. W.—An apprenticeship is entitled to his wages during absence through illness.

INQUIRER.—A man cannot be prosecuted for playing cards for money in his own house.

IGNORAMUS.—There is still a duty on tea, while that on beer has existed for a very long time.

FLUFFY.—It is not necessary you should give both Christmas and birthday presents.

M. C.—You cannot prevent staining except you place ordinary blotting paper between tissue and oiled sheet.

JOET.—The substitute for ivory now in general use is celluloid, which must however be moulded to shape.

B. A.—This may be checked when it first begins, but if it has gone too far nothing will save it. You might try sulphuring.

E. P.—If the widow or children have any property belonging to the deceased they are to that extent liable for his debts.

QUEEN CUSTODIAN.—The only cure for varicose veins in one employed as you are is an elastic stocking, obtainable from a surgical appliance maker.

FAMOT.—Parents or guardians have no legal control, as regards marriage, over persons twenty-one years of age.

W. T.—We advise you to buy wholesale rather than attempt to save money by becoming your own manufacturer.

HUFFIE.—When warrant is issued for the apprehension of a criminal it is supposed to be operative for twenty years.

A WORRIED READER.—An English girl marrying a young Frenchman under twenty-five would be a wife in England, and not one in France.

LITTLE HOUKEKEEPER.—By sprinkling cream of tartar thickly upon the ink-stained sheet while it is damp the greater part of the black stain will be removed.

CONSTANT READER.—Consult a good oculist. At your age the eyes should receive the very best possible care, and the proper thing to do is to attend to them at once.

A WINTER.—Witnesses to wills have nothing whatever to do with proving them. Should they be disputed their evidence as to their due execution would be required.

LITTLE FLIRT.—You should discourage as much as possible the advances of two many admirers. Men are very wary of uniting themselves with determined coquettesses.

BEEF V. BREAD.—One pound of beef contains rather more albumen than one pound of bread. Albumen is what builds up the body, and in beef it is rather more concentrated than in bread.

POGGY.—Dog biscuits pounded up and a little mixed with scalded Indian corn, either whole or in meal, and given in conjunction, but not too lavishly with the other winter food, helps greatly.

UNFORTUNATE.—A teaspoon put into a tumbler before pouring in boiling water will often prevent the glass from cracking, especially if you pour the water in very slowly.

LADY BETTY.—To keep the half moon showing at the root of the nails, push the flesh gently back with the towel every time you wash your hands. Do it carefully, and do not break the flesh.

HAPPLESS HARRY.—As the young lady is not yet bound by any pledge to become your wife, she has a perfect right to choose her company and accept anyone of her numerous friends as an escort to picnics and other forms of outing.

GRATEFUL READER.—It only wants cleaning, sponge it well with benzine diluted with an equal quantity of water. In any case it should be cleansed quite free from the greasy stain all over woolen things get from wear.

A MYTH.—Six gods and six goddesses composed the council of Jupiter. The gods were Jupiter, Neptune, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, and Vulcan. The goddesses were Juno, Ceres, Vesta, Minerva, Diana and Venus. Descriptions of each will be found in works on mythology.

MADE MARJORIE.—It is impossible for cream to rise through a great depth of milk. If you wish to free the milk almost entirely of cream, place it in a broad, flat dish, not more than one inch deep, but if you wish to retain the cream for a time, put it in a deep, narrow vessel.

AMATEUR.—In training the voice there are many methods, but a large number of them are very faulty, and a great many good voices are utterly spoiled, while but little is made of others. By practice one may be able to sing higher notes and add much to the compass of the voice.

TRROUBLED MAUD.—The only proper and wise course to pursue is to avoid the society of the man as much as possible, and cultivate the habit of thinking that all of his time and attention and interest belong to some one else, and cannot by any possibility be diverted without great wrong being done. There is no middle ground.

D. F.—If you do not know the street and district in which the marriage was celebrated there will be very great difficulty in obtaining the certificate, because the books of the whole of the districts into which the city is divided must be gone over for ten years, probably only to find the record in the last one, after perhaps four days' constant search.

"OH, NOT THAT WE MUST PART!"

Oh, where can the mighty gleaner be
That heedeth not my prayer
To end this constant misery
And still this soul's despair?
Or where on earth can mercy be,
That yet my breaking heart
Must hear that voice cry out to me,
"Oh, not that we must part!"

Oh, why do I see that look of woe,
And hear those bitter cries,
And watch the tears of sorrow flow
From out those saddened eyes?
Oh, where indeed can mercy be,
That yet I see that start,
And hear those mournful words to me
"Oh, not that we must part!"

Ah, why do dreams place me beside
That gentle form divine,
And picture her a happy bride
With hands clasped close in mine,
When memory with pangs of pain
Awakes me with a start,
To hear that voice cry out again,
"Oh, not that we must part!"

Kind Heaven, may remembrance fade
And be to me no more,
Or let me find a peaceful shade
Upon a fairer shore;
For oh! I cannot longer bear
This bitterness of heart,
Nor suffer her to thus despair—
"Oh, not that we must part!"

COPPER.—It should have been rubbed till dry. You had better rub with the moist bran again, and in place of leaving it to dry continue the rubbing till dry. This will take away all the dirt with the bran; when quite dry rub with quite dry bran. The moist bran is usually applied with a piece of flannel, the dry bran with book muslin.

DAISY BELL.—If you will take the hard brush with which you polish up your grates, knock it free of every particle of dust, then dry over your sofa or couch with it, brushing rapidly, you will restore the original gloss to the cloth without imparting any colouring matter that would be likely to come off upon the clothes of those using the couch.

LENA.—Well wash the celery, and keep it in the cool till wanted; then dry on a cloth, and cut in thin sliced sticks, one and a half inch long, or in short julienne shapes. Season it with pepper and salt, oil, and tarragon or other vinegar, and chopped shallot; mix well together, and serve in a salad-bowl. Garnish with slices of tomatoe or beetroot, cut in fancy shapes and sliced like the celery.

NEW CORRESPONDENT.—Four ounces yellow wax, two ounces yellow soap, fifty ounce (measurement) of water; boil with constant stirring, and add boiled linseed oil and oil of turpentine, each five ounces; this is a good recipe, but there are numerous others, and of course, all are favoured with some people; an excellent freshener of furniture is hot linseed oil (boiled) rubbed on with a warm flannel and rubbed up after a bit with another hot dry flannel.

TANBY.—Slice some cold new potatoes, the thickness of a penny piece, and mix them with quartered hard-boiled eggs and sliced beetroot. Have ready a dressing of one part tarragon vinegar to two or three of salad oil, salt and pepper; sprinkle the salad first with finely-chopped chives, parsley and chervil, then add the dressing, and toss all over and over lightly (careful to break the potatoe as little as possible) till every morsel is saturated with the mixture, and serve in a bowl.

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